Her Majesty's Most Disloyal Opposition: Irish America and the Making of US Policy Toward Northern Ireland

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by Abi McGowan

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Project Advisor: Professor Joe Parrott, Department of History

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Abbreviations

AOH - Ancient Order of Hibernians
BIS - British Information Services
FCO - Foreign and Commonwealth Office
DOJ – Department of Justice
NIO - Northern Ireland Office
DFA - Department of Foreign Affairs
HMG - Her Majesty's Government
GOI - Government of Ireland
DUP - Democratic Unionist Party
ECHR - European Court of Human Rights
INAC - Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAID)
MP -Member of Parliament
NICRA - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
P/IRA - Provisional Irish Republican Army (Provos)
ROI -Republic of Ireland
SDLP - Social Democratic and Labour Party
USG - United States Government

Political Parties

Northern Ireland
Provisional Sinn Fein
Democratic Unionist Party
Social Democratic and Labour Party

Republic of Ireland
Fine Gael
Fianna Fáll

United Kingdom
Labour
Conservative

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Introduction

Northern Ireland is a place with a long and geographically expansive memory. Contestation regarding the liberty of Northern Ireland is no secret, however, this animosity often followed the migration of the "global Irish" to the United States in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Though by the late 20th century these migrants found themselves long removed from their physical homeland, they still generated interest in the thirty-year civil war transpiring in their homeland. Between 1968 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, violence controlled Northern Ireland. This event, referred to as "The Troubles," represented a clash between Protestant loyalists who supported the Union with Great Britain and Catholic nationalists who favored reunification with Ireland. If you ask a Catholic in Derry why the Troubles erupted, they will tell you that British imperialism dating back to Oliver Cromwell is to blame. If you ask a Protestant the same question on the Shankhill Road in Belfast, they may tell you that Catholics have never gotten over their loss at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. And if you ask an Irish Catholic in 1970s Boston regarding their opinion on the matter, they would likely respond with equal vigor.

Of course, this hypothetical interrogation did not define the political involvement of every Irish American citizen. In the 1970s, the United States hosted a population of over 40 million Irish Americans. But this discourse permeated the dialogue of Irish Americans who chose to vocalize their opinion regarding the Troubles. The prominent heritage of Irish Americans did not remain the only factor that tied their sympathies to "The Troubles" in Ireland. Two concepts energized American interest in Northern Ireland: Irish America's perception of the Troubles as a vestige of imperialism, and the broader international human rights movement, with its liberal critique of right-wing allies of the U.S. Both of these concepts focused on the role of the British

state in Northern Ireland but lacked recognition of the two conflicting communities in Northern Ireland: Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists.

As violence became the new normal for Northern Ireland in the 1970s, Irish Americans began to financially and morally support the Irish Republican Army as the most legitimate actor in the conflict, harkening back to their antiquated conceptions of the "Irish question." Diasporic organizations such as the Irish National Caucus and Northern Irish Aid lobbied the US government to end implicit support for British policy in Northern Ireland and support the reunification of the island, indicating a lack of information on the dynamics governing the conflict. Congressmen with vocal constituencies began to adopt Irish American positions, unknowingly supporting the militant republicanism of the IRA. The American understanding of the conflict was wholly different from the realities on the ground. Thus, four of the most prominent Irish American politicians made it their mission to redirect Americans' misguided understanding toward a moderate, peaceful message. In order to effectively persuade the public, these politicians persuaded President Jimmy Carter to issue a statement on Northern Ireland. The Carter Initiative began a precedent of American involvement in Northern Ireland to promote peace, one that was built upon by Presidents Reagan, H.W. Bush, and most consequentially, Clinton.

Scholars within Irish Studies tend to focus on the political relationships between the British and American governments without exploring the domestic political dynamics that shaped the American response to the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Early works on America's reaction to the Troubles, such as The Greening of the White House and John Dumbrell's "The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict 1969–94: from Indifference to Intervention," focus on US involvement during the Clinton administration, without paying much attention to earlier federal

efforts. Andrew Sander's The Long Peace Process provides a chronological overview of the United States' relationship with Northern Ireland dating back to Eisenhower, but does not dedicate time to key actors such as John Hume. In my effort to synthesize trends in the American understanding of Northern Ireland in tandem with diplomatic relations between the United States, Great Britain, and the Republic of Ireland, I offer an approach based on the significant governmental and organizational actors. This approach allows me to explore the contributions of both governments and communities to formulate United States foreign policy toward Northern Ireland.

With the historiographic realities in mind, this thesis seeks to trace the evolution of US policy toward Northern Ireland during its initial engagement. From grassroots activists, to Congressional representatives spurred by constituent interest and concern, to governments making policy, Irish Americans from varying social and political spheres responded to the conflict. By analyzing these individuals' public and governmental discourse, I am able to provide a fuller picture of the interests and dynamics behind the U.S. foreign policy toward Northern Ireland. The roles and beliefs of political actors clarified the formation of such policy. To begin with, Irish Americans issued support for the Provisional IRA. Debates in Congress later mirrored these public attitudes and a select few members of Congress began to temper opposition to British involvement and redirected their attentions to the communities in Northern Ireland. Their early success resulted in the direct involvement of an American president determined to speak out for peace. In the first chapter, I will talk about the historical developments that contributed to the Irish American diaspora's distinct brand of nationalism. In the second chapter, I will discuss how American political institutions responded to Irish American lobbying, and how the conflict in Northern Ireland fit within the broader human rights discourse. The third chapter will discuss

the ultimate result of American interest in Northern Ireland: President Jimmy Carter issuing a public statement on the conflict.

The greatest American contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland was to balance the diplomatic dynamic between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The U.S. was the only place where this rebalancing of the Anglo-Irish relationship could take place because of American centrality in British relations, and it had significant repercussions for the long-term trajectory of Northern Ireland. Ted Kennedy, Tip O'Neill, Hugh Carey, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, fashioning themselves as the Four Horsemen, understood the dynamics of the two communities in Northern Ireland, and therefore recognized the need to include the Republic of Ireland. The significance of the Four Horsemen was not immediately felt; it would take close to a decade before their message began to resonate in corners of Irish America.

The story of United States' engagement with Northern Ireland is special for a few reasons. The United States' policy toward the United Kingdom's smallest province was not driven by geopolitical, security, or economic considerations, or any top-down factor that usually drives American foreign policy. Rather, the movement to contribute to the "long peace process" was motivated by Americans themselves, compelled by ties of blood, heritage, and affinity, to speak out against injustice and suffering. The United States had very little to gain from speaking out, but sustained American involvement played a crucial role in the road to reconciliation in the 1990s. To understand how the US was able to take such decisive action, it is important to study the initial steps taken by the Carter administration that made the later Clinton era initiative possible. The United States was also forced to reconcile diplomatic relations between its closest political ally, in the form of the special relationship with the United Kingdom, and the Republic

of Ireland, from which forty million Americans claimed heritage. Finally, the human rights critique first directed at third world dictators was directed toward a fellow liberal democracy.

A Note on Terminology

Defining the two communities involved in the Troubles can be difficult, as terms carry more of a social connotation than their plain meaning. Within the context of Northern Ireland, referring to an individual as a Catholic denotes more of a cultural meaning than indicating a person's identification with the Roman Catholic Church. An overwhelming proportion of Irish nationalists, who sought to unify the island of Ireland under one republic, were of Catholic descent. So, I will use the terms Catholic, republican, and nationalist synonymously throughout the paper. Similarly, most individuals in Northern Ireland who supported Great Britain's union with Northern Ireland, or were loyal to the government of the United Kingdom, were of Protestant descent. I will synonymously refer to this community as Protestant, loyalist, or unionist.[1]

Gilles Caron/Foundation Gilles Caron

[1] For more information on Northern Ireland terminology, the University of Ulster's Conflict Archive glossary provides helpful background: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/glossary.htm.

Chapter I: Irish Nationalism, Irish Diaspora

"The real border in Ireland is not a line on a map. It's in the minds and hearts of people; you can't get rid of that in a week or a fortnight. You need a healing process. So we have to create the structures in which the people will work together rather than shooting each other, as we have done for centuries."[2] -John Hume

Political History of Northern Ireland

The political and ethnic dynamics that caused the Troubles cannot be analyzed in a vacuum: it is crucial to understand the long and troubled history between the two nations. The root of conflict in Northern Ireland is encapsulated by the "Irish question" — the British euphemism referring to the United Kingdom's troubled relationship with its island neighbor. Since the incorporation of Ireland by King Henry VIII in 1541, governing the island has plagued British administrations. The Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland was later obtained through William of Orange's victory over James II in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. To pacify and 'civilize' the Irish after the island was conquered, the English Crown incentivized Protestants from England and Scotland to settle and displace Catholics from their lands. The northeast province of Ulster underwent the most pervasive colonization, creating a distinct ethnic dynamic separate from the rest of Ireland. Although the people living and working on the land did not change, property and wealth were transferred from native Catholics to Protestants, effectively creating a class divide along religious lines. From this settlement, the foundation of ethnic difference was solidified in Ireland's northeast. When unionists or republicans are asked to explain the source of discord between their two communities, they will often refer back to these centuries-old conflicts to justify respective grievances.

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[2] Transcript, John Hume Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/john-hume-oral-history.

The impetus for Irish independence took shape in the nineteenth century. In 1798, the Society of United Irishmen launched a rebellion inspired by the French and American revolutions to rid English control of Irish affairs. Led by Theobald Wolfe Tone, the rebellion united Protestants, Catholics, and Dissenters to seek a united, republican Ireland. Due to poor coordination, the isolated nature of rebellions, and delayed support from the French army, the rising was a failure. In response to the suppressed rebellion, the government in Westminster passed the Act of Union in 1801. This legislation revoked Ireland of its legislative autonomy by abolishing the devolved Dublin parliament and centralizing control in London.[3] The Rebellion of 1798 had the exact opposite effect of its stated goal, and England and Ireland became more integrated than ever before. Yet the loss of independence only served to enhance the idea that Ireland was separate and distinct from the rest of the United Kingdom.[4]

In addition to nationalist sentiment, the natural catastrophe of the potato famine further delegitimized English rule. Successive years of blight decimated the potato crop beginning in 1846, but this natural catastrophe was exacerbated by British mismanagement. A year after the blight began, Ireland had enough food imports to significantly alleviate starvation. But the Whig government proved inept or unwilling to distribute food to landholders and laborers in the south and west, creating an artificial famine.[5] Three factors contributed to the willful neglect on the part of the British government. First, the vast resources that were required to prevent mass starvation went against the Whigs' philosophy of limited government. Moreover, there was a widespread belief among the British elites that the famine served as 'divine providence' for

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[3] Thomas Bartlett, "The 1798 Irish Rebellion," British Broadcasting Corporation, February 17, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/irish_reb_01.shtml.
[4] G.C. Bolton, "Act of Union," in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. S.J. Connolly, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199234837.001.0001/acref-9780199234837-e-1937.
[5] Jim Donnelley, "The Irish Famine," British Broadcasting Corporation, February 17, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/famine_01.shtml.

inefficient agrarian methods on Irish farms. Most unsettling, the British saw the famine as a result of ethnic or national inferiority. Irish moral decay, lack of self-reliance, and laziness were the cause of the crisis, and the famine would teach the nation self-help. 'Famine fatigue,' aided by dehumanizing portrayals of 'Paddy' in English media, quickly extinguished any impetus for action.[6] Sir Charles Trevelyan, the British civil servant charged with handling the humanitarian crisis, was a chief proponent of this providentialism. He viewed the famine as "the sharp but effectual remedy by which the cure is likely to be effected... God grant that the generation to which this great opportunity has been offered may rightly perform its part…"[7] The famine exposed the reservoir of animosity between Ireland and its ruling class in England. The British contempt toward Ireland during the famine convinced many Irish that the British would never treat or govern them with respect, and the movement for independence gained momentum.

Beginning in the 1870s, Irish disaffection for British control over the island was channeled through the Home Rule movement. Rather than identify with the British Liberal and Tory parties, Irish MPs began to join the Irish Parliamentary Party in Westminster. When Charles Stewart Parnell was elected chairman, the party gained significant power within parliament, pairing the campaign for home rule with the advocacy of tenant rights. From 1886 through 1913, the House of Commons introduced three bills establishing home rule in Ireland; the first bill was blocked by Irish Unionists in the Commons, while the House of Lords defeated the second. The 1913 Home Rule bill allowed for a bicameral legislature subordinate to Westminster, with numerous constitutional protections for Protestants in Ulster. By this time, anticipation for home rule in Ireland made the proposition seem inevitable. Yet the House of

[6] Tim Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* (Manhattan: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 213.
[7] Jim Donnelley, "The Irish Famine."

Lords stalled on the legislation, and the Home Rule bill was in limbo during World War I. Three failed attempts to gain Irish self-determination through the electoral process convinced many people that the British would never hand over power peacefully— more drastic action needed to be taken to force the government's hand. When nationalists in Northern Ireland were unsuccessful in gaining democratic reforms through social advocacy in the 1960s, communities would reach a similar conclusion.

Irish republicans saw a Britain distracted with a continental war as the perfect opportunity to achieve full independence. In March 1916, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood launched an armed insurrection in Dublin known as the Easter Rising. A group of separatists occupied the General Post Office (GPO) and proclaimed the creation of the Irish Republic, with the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood serving as the Provisional Government of this republic. Despite the IRB's successful occupation of strategic buildings throughout Dublin, the insurgents were unable to conquer the seat of British government at Dublin Castle, and the British army shelled the GPO until the leaders surrendered. The fallout from the Easter Rising had a greater impact than the rebellion itself. Most people condemned the uprising's destruction in the immediate aftermath; 450 people (mostly civilians) were killed, 2,500 more were injured, and the center of Dublin was destroyed. But, like the British handling of the 1798 Rebellion, the government's harsh response turned public opinion in favor of the nationalists. Thousands of Irishmen were interned in camps while 15 ringleaders were sentenced to death by firing squad over the period of a week. Although the insurrection failed, it stirred nationalist sentiment that had stagnated since the parliamentary paralysis of the Home Rule Bill. The legacy of the 1916 Easter Rising, and especially of the role of the Irish

Republican Brotherhood paramilitary group, would inspire the Provisional Irish Republican Army as it launched its war against the United Kingdom.

When the Easter Rising ended, the nationalist Sinn Fein party won seventy-three seats in the 1918 UK general election, effectively ending the movement for moderate, constitutional nationalism. Sinn Fein's policy of abstention meant that the representatives refused to occupy their seats in Westminster. Instead, the MPs declared the first Dáil Eiréann, or the Assembly of Ireland, to govern their desired Republic. This act basically declared Irish independence from the United Kingdom. Nationalists will reference the first Dáil Eiréann, which claimed to politically represent all of the island, as the only legitimate legislature to govern Ireland. The War of Independence, or the Anglo-Irish War, followed this declaration from 1919-1921. Members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood who had instigated the Easter Rising renamed themselves the Irish Republican Army, representing the new Provisional Republic, and commenced guerilla war against the Royal Irish Constabulary in Ireland. An uneasy truce was reached through the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. This agreement granted constitutional status to twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties as the Irish Free State, which would have dominion status within the British Commonwealth. The Anglo-Irish Treaty represented an immense compromise from the unified republic Irish nationalists had fought for, and significant debate consumed the south before ratification.[8] The Irish Free State would later reject the Commonwealth and become the Republic of Ireland in 1937. The national controversy surrounding the Anglo-Irish Treaty would persist long after partition, and a significant minority of nationalists would seek opportunities to reunite the island and rectify the problematic compromise with the British.

[8] Marie-Christine Veldeman, "The Easter Rising 1916: a Minor Incident of Major Importance in Modern Irish History," *Equivalences* 34, no. 1, (2007): 151-163.

Meanwhile, the six wealthiest and most industrialized of Ulster's nine counties chose to remain in the union with Great Britain, with Protestants' employing the slogan "Home rule is Rome rule." At the conception of Northern Ireland, two thirds of its population identified as Protestant unionists, and the ruling class was fiercely determined to keep it that way.[9] From partition through the next four decades, Northern Ireland was governed by a simple majority rule that effectively made the province a de-facto one party state. In every provincial election between 1921 and 1969, the Unionist party defeated the Nationalist party, inducing widespread apathy toward politics. The civil service was overwhelmingly Protestant: Catholic representation peaked at ten percent for the lower levels of bureaucracy, while no Catholics held senior positions in the cabinet, police force, or other public bodies.[10] The workings of local politics exposed the kind of blatant sectarian discrimination that drove the Catholic sentiment of oppression. Only heads of household were able to vote, rather than the one man, one vote principle that was present in the rest of the United Kingdom.[11] This disadvantaged larger Catholic families living under one roof and secured a majority for the Ulster Unionist Party in the devolved government called Stormont. Catholics were further marginalized by the gerrymandered drawing of electoral boundaries to favor Protestant candidates, even in predominantly Catholic areas like Derry.[12] Whereas Protestant single women were allotted spacious flats in Belfast, large Catholic families were perpetually on a waiting list to be afforded public council housing. There was also ethnic discrimination by employers, especially in public service, further subjugating Catholics to the lower class. Government in Northern Ireland

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[9] J.L. McCracken, "Northern Ireland: 1921-66," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T. W. Moody (Plymouth: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2011), 273-282.
[10] David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, (London: Viking, 2012), 13.
[11] Feargal Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 31-40.
[12] BBC History, "The Troubles, 1963-1985," British Broadcasting Corporation, September 18, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/the_troubles_article_01.shtml.

purposely worked against a third of its population. Obvious discrimination in political and economic life would spur the movement for Catholic civil rights.

The prime minister for Northern Ireland who oversaw this quiet oppression in the 1940s and 50s once advised, "I recommend those people who are Loyalists not to employ Roman Catholics, 99 percent of whom are disloyal...If you don't act properly now, before we know where we are we shall find ourselves in the minority instead of the majority. I want you to realize that, having done your bit, you have got your Prime Minister behind you."[13] Since most Catholics possessed an Irish national identity, rather than a British one, Protestants believed Catholics could never be loyal to the state in Northern Ireland, they were not to be trusted at all. Parliamentarian John Hume diagnosed the inherent flaw in the creation and political structure of Northern Ireland such that, "When one tells the majority that it can protect itself only by remaining in the majority, one invites it to maintain sectarian solidarity as the only means of protection. Therefore, one makes sectarianism the motive force of politics."[14] Northern Ireland's boundaries were drawn to ensure that Protestant unionists would have their own state. Since the province's inception, unionists possessed a deep-seated fear that this supermajority was under threat— nationalists were a minority that could not be assimilated, and their existence posed a danger. Protestants could not trust Catholics living in the north, nor could they trust that Great Britain would not have a change of heart and abandon the union. Either way, Protestants' greatest fear was to live in a state as an ethnic minority. Thus, politics in Northern Ireland were consumed by the unionist consolidation of power and consequent disenfranchisement of the Catholic minority. The overzealousness with which Protestants went about subjugating the opposing community would eventually be their undoing— Catholics felt no obligation to be

[13] Quoted in M. Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*, Pluto Press, London, 1976, 90-91.
[14] Parliamentary Papers, Hansard, 509, 28 June 1983.

loyal to a state that denied their existence, and oppression only heightened their support for a united Ireland. Catholics' preference for an end to politics as usual would become increasingly clear as Northern Ireland entered the Troubles.

Upon assuming the premiership in 1963, Terence O'Neill recognized that the social and economic disparities in Northern Ireland were not sustainable, but his attempts to shake up the status quo made him unpopular in both communities. The prime minister's promises put the Protestant population on alert, threatening the full control they held over the province. O'Neill was never able to gain support for his reform agenda within his own party, so real change was doomed from the start. From the Catholic perspective, O'Neill's efforts failed to deliver the advancements they expected. Rather than reform the exclusionary aspects of the province's political institutions, O'Neill simply believed community relations needed to improve, mainly by chastising Catholics to end their self-pity and live like Protestants. Much like the British approach to the famine in the prior century, the prime minister believed Catholics needed a change of attitude more than anything else. The internal strife between a defensive unionist community and a republican one grasping for reform pushed society to an untenable edge. Catholics would no longer accept the status quo, and Protestants believed their society was in jeopardy.

In response to the Northern Ireland executive's inability to improve the situation of Catholics, a broad coalition of young people took to peaceful protest. A movement for civil rights in Northern Ireland, inspired by African Americans' struggle for equality in the United States, gained traction in 1968 through a series of marches and sit-ins. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) platform advocated for one man, one vote, the redrawing of electoral boundaries, a points system for housing allocation, antidiscrimination legislation, and

the disbanding of the harsh, Protestant-dominated auxiliary police.[15] NICRA increasingly adopted a confrontational relationship with Northern Ireland's police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the Stormont government as it purposely sought to end the movement. Over time, these peaceful marches for equality descended into sectarian violence as more radical and militant organizers, and some members of emerging paramilitary organizations, clashed with intolerant police. Moreover, there was a strong feeling in unionist communities that the advocacy groups for economic and political equality were merely fronts for Irish nationalism, a Trojan horse for a united Ireland. On an October 5, 1968 civil rights march, police officers began to beat protesters with clubs and batons as they entered the walled city of Derry. Additionally, Protestant loyalists converged to attack the marchers. Coverage of Labour MP Gerry Fitt with his head split open from a police attack was shown on the evening news. Civilians outraged by the police violence responded with riots, throwing petrol bombs at the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Black and white footage displayed the breakdown of law and order to the world. It became clear that Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill was unfit to bring about real reform, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary was incapable of restraining violence. Although the exact starting point of the Troubles is contested, the escalation of violence of these civil rights marches and police confrontations marked the point of no return for Northern Ireland.[16]

As civil rights demonstrations began to spiral into police confrontations and rioting, Catholic neighborhoods felt under attack. The Irish Republican Army of the Easter Rising and War for Independence was based in the Republic, and the group received considerable criticism for not doing enough to defend Catholics in the north. Over the years, the IRA had increasingly

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[15] David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 44.
[16] David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 50.

become focused on Marxist ideology. There was a feeling among republicans, many from Northern Ireland, that the IRA had strayed too much from its highest priority: the reunification of Ireland. So, in its 1969 Ard Fheis convention, the IRA voted to split into two. The Official IRA held the support of the old guard and would fizzle out over time. Meanwhile, the Provisional IRA (IRA), or the Provos, initiated its "long war" to fight the British state in Northern Ireland and protect Catholic communities targeted by loyalist paramilitaries, like the Ulster Defense Association and Ulster Volunteer Force.[17] Irish Americans were heartened by the idea that nationalist Catholic communities had a champion to defend against the sectarian majority, and they saw the reemergence of the IRA as finishing up the work of the Irish War for Independence.

Another pivotal turning point in the Troubles was Bloody Sunday in January 1972. The introduction of internment without trial for individuals suspected of terrorist activity had reignited the protest movement for civil rights. A group of one thousand demonstrators were authorized by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to march on Magilligan strand internment camp in Derry, but the British troops patrolling the area opened fire on the crowd, killing thirteen people. This tragedy prompted international scrutiny and ignited a firestorm of opposition in the United States. In the aftermath, Senator Ted Kennedy called Bloody Sunday, "a new chapter of violence and terror… being written in this history of Ireland… written in the blood of a new generation of Irish men and women and children."[18] International concern grew for the rising violence in Northern Ireland, specifically from the Irish diaspora in the United States, which would continue to be a thorn in Britain's side for decades to come.

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[17] Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[18] Hearings on Northern Ireland, Testimony of Senator Edward Kennedy, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe, February 2, 1972, in Attitude of Government and Citizens of the United States of America Toward Political Situation in Northern Ireland, FCO 87/102, The National Archives.

The Troubles erupted in Northern Ireland because the Catholic population would no longer tolerate their status as second-class citizens within a state they did not see as legitimate. When their peaceful calls for reform were met with repression and violence by the government in Northern Ireland, the state became untenable. Moreover, the deployment of the British army to restore order to society was viewed by Catholics as a means to sustain the Protestant-dominated status quo. Distrust of the British government was historically ingrained in the Catholic population, and some nationalists would conclude that the only way to end their suffering was to push the British government out of the last corner of Ireland. Thus, the Provisional IRA emerged to wage that battle. Unionist communities were alarmed by the resurgence of militant Irish nationalism, and they organized their own paramilitary organizations to protect their own. While the IRA claimed to be waging a revolutionary war for Irish independence, they also responded to the tit-for-tat sectarian killings by the loyalist UVF and UDA forces. Thus, the Troubles gained a recognizable rhythm: the murder of Catholics protesters on Bloody Sunday was followed by an IRA bombing spree in Protestant areas of Belfast, known as Bloody Friday. The Troubles only ended when Northern Ireland was exhausted by violence and both sides recognized that they could not overpower each other. Waves of violence would wear down nationalist and unionist leaders, prompting them to listen to the growing, moderate voices on either side that advocated a new political compromise as the solution.

One of the most prominent moderate voices in Northern Ireland was a man named John Hume, and he would become the essential link between constitutional nationalism in Northern Ireland to concerned officials in the US government. As a leader of the civil rights movement and the moderate nationalist SDLP party, Hume was able to bridge the gap between Catholics in the North and Irish America. Hume was the eldest of seven children born to an impoverished

Catholic family in 1937. A beneficiary of the postwar UK welfare state, the 1947 Education Act allowed children from underprivileged families like Hume to seek higher learning. Hume studied French and History at Maynooth University and later obtained a master's degree from St. Patrick's College, where his master's thesis focused on the northwest of Ireland. He turned this thesis into a documentary on Derry in 1963, named *A City Solitary*. Through early municipal activism as a debater, businessman, and high school teacher by day, John Hume became a prominent citizen of Derry.

The Irish Times discovered *A City Solitary* and invited Hume to write articles on Northern Ireland for its predominantly southern readership. 'The Northern Catholic' detailed the inequities and disenfranchisement Catholics faced as a minority in the province and set out a way for Catholics to change their own destiny. Hume's primary critique was directed at the failure of nationalist political parties to improve the standard of living for Catholics in the north. In short, nationalist politics was preoccupied with ideology and symbolism to the detriment of the community they claimed to represent. With the guiding principles of anti-partition and a united Ireland, nationalists struggled to prioritize these beliefs while engaging in a government they saw as illegitimate. Reforming social problems, such as the shortage of housing and reducing unemployment, seemed trivial in the broader context of a political structure imposed upon Catholics without their democratic consent. A united Ireland was offered as a cure-all panacea in place of politics as usual. Because of this republican orthodoxy, the quality of life for Catholics was not attended to by any sector of government.[19] Hume's appraisal was searing:

> In forty years of opposition [the Nationalist Party] have not produced one constructive contribution on either the social or economic plane to the development of Northern

[19] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 2.

> Ireland which is, after all, a substantial part of the United Ireland for which they strive. Leadership has been the comfortable leadership of flags and slogans… It is the lack of positive contribution and the apparent lack of interest in the general welfare of Northern Ireland that has led many Protestants to believe that the Northern Catholic is politically irresponsible and immature and therefore unfit to rule.[20]

Essentially, republicans needed to accept the current constitutional position in order to bring about normal politics to Northern Ireland. It is important to stress how novel Hume's ideas were to the neglected communities who had quietly suffered under the status quo; his early writings served to empower Catholics to retake agency. Hume argued that Catholics could still believe that a united Ireland was the best solution, yet constructively work toward inclusive politics. Additionally, communities needed to work together to create an economy in which every individual could prosper. John Hume had diagnosed Northern Ireland's problems and proposed the proper solutions before the Troubles had even started. The core foundations of Hume's approach centered on inclusivity, gradualism, and participation. These writings formed the basis for Hume's pathway to a more just society for decades to come, a message that would later persuade Irish American politicians to take political risks in the name of peace.

As the movement for justice in the 1960s progressed, Hume began to work toward his vision for an inclusive and peaceful society. He founded the Derry Credit Union and became the youngest president of the Irish League of Credit Unions; John saw this movement as a tangible method to create an inclusive economy. Hume also led a failed campaign to place Northern Ireland's second university in Derry, the second largest in population and a predominantly Catholic city. This experience exposed Hume to the indifference of government officials toward the plight of the minority. From that point on, John Hume was an outspoken critic of the

[20] John Hume, "The Northern Catholic," *The Irish Times*, 18 May 1964.

Unionist government. He became a leader of the Derry Citizens' Action Committee to promote the fledgling civil rights movement.

To organize and advocate for constitutional nationalism, John Hume was a founding member of the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) in 1970, along with prominent nationalists Paddy Devlin, Austin Currie, Gerry Fitt, and Seamus Mallon. The SDLP was the largest party representing the nationalist community throughout the Troubles. Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern has stated, "Hume changed the view of most Irish people living on the island who have a nationalist outlook, and that is that you can't just unify the territory. You have to unify the *people*."[21] By the end of the 1960s, John Hume represented the Foyle constituency in the Parliament of Northern Ireland as an Independent Nationalist. In 1972, the Parliament was abolished and direct rule by Westminster was instituted. A new Northern Ireland Assembly was created in 1973, with Hume serving as its Minister for Commerce before it was abolished four months later due to unionist opposition. Hume's early efforts to reform the system from within were met with unionist intransigence, but his activism and inspirational message attracted international attention by the early 1970s. Unable to enact change from within his state's political institutions, the nationalist leader looked abroad to garner support for a new, nonviolent approach; John Hume essentially became a diplomat for Northern Ireland.

John Hume recognized that the United States government must be brought in as a third element to break the stalemate between the ROI and UK governments, essentially acting as an arbiter between the two. The Irish government was integral to the peace process, but it was in a weak position relative to the historical great power status of the United Kingdom. As the stronger

[21] Transcript, Dermot Ahern Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/dermot-ahern-oral-history.

half of the special relationship, the United States was the only state dominant enough to hold leverage over the United Kingdom. Not only John Hume held this view, but most of the Irish Republic's Department of Foreign Affairs. A 1977 editorial aptly observed, "In Dublin and to a lesser degree in London - the feeling was increasing that the despair and sense of personal and group isolation could only be broken by a bold stroke of policy from somewhere other than Dublin, London or Belfast, where new ideas had long been gripped in a modern version of Bunyan's Slough of Despond.[22]

With persistent violence plaguing Northern Ireland and no political settlement in sight, John Hume pursued Ireland's largest diaspora to reenergize the peace process. However, a significant portion of Irish Americans did not identify with John Hume's message of constitutional nationalism. Instead, politically engaged Irish Americans identified with the message of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, as it was more consistent with the diaspora's historical experiences of migration. Although Hume was not successful in persuading much of Irish America that the IRA's terrorism was not the answer to Northern Ireland's problems, he was able to convince the leading Irish American politicians in Congress. Once Hume partnered with Irish Congressional leaders, he was successful in his foremost objective: influencing the United States government to balance the Anglo-Irish relationship, laying the foundation for an eventual peace process.

[22] David Murray, "The Irish American Stake," *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1977/09/04/the-irish-american-stake/0815e7d8-c159-4939-af5c-0843be163f33/.

Politics of Diaspora

> "The Irish are the biggest wandering people in the world. The country to which they wandered most was the United States. There are 45 million Irish Americans, but they all took the simplistic point of view during the years, unite Ireland."[23] -John Hume

To analyze why the Troubles elicited such an emotional response from so many Americans in the twentieth century, a proper understanding of the Irish presence in the United States must be understood. The Irish as an ethnic group have been one of the most historically dominant populations in the United States, with immigration from Ireland present since colonial times. From 1740 to 1922, it is estimated that the United States received nearly 7 million Irish arrivals.[24] The second and most well-known wave of immigration was a response to the potato famine, from which half a million people left Ireland for the US between 1845-1850. Needless to say, the dominance of the Irish rested in part on strength in numbers.

Irish communities settled across the country, but large enclaves developed on the urban eastern seaboard, especially in places like Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia. By 1850, New York City had the same number of Irish-born individuals as Dublin.[25] Information from the 1880 US Census indicated that Irish immigrants constituted over ten percent of the population in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.[26] As these mostly poor, Catholic Irish settled in the United States, they encountered discrimination from the Protestant Anglo-Saxon ruling class. The United States' first anti-immigration political party, the Know-Nothings, was founded during this second wave of Irish immigration. Nativists perceived a flood of foreigners whose

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[23] Transcript, John Hume Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/john-hume-oral-history.
[24] Kerby A. Miller, "Emigrants and Exiles: Irish Cultures and Irish Emigration to North America, 1790-1922," *Irish Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1980): 97-125, www.jstor.org/stable/30008769.
[25] David Brundage, Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile, 1798-1998 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 88.
[26]Fletcher W Hewes and Henry Gannett, Scribner's statistical atlas of the United States, showing by graphic methods their present condition and their political, social and industrial development, (New York, C. Scribner's sons, 1883), Map, https://www.loc.gov/item/a40001834/.

characteristics were supposedly incompatible with American values. In light of this nativism and prejudice, scholars of the Irish diaspora have concluded the defining feature of the immigrant experience as race. Similar to the British perceptions of the potato famine as self-inflicted laziness, the United States viewed the Irish through a lens of racial and ethnic inferiority, often characterizing them in political cartoons as apes or lazy drunks incapable of being productive members of society.[27] In addition, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and its allegiance to the pope was seen as a threat that could undermine American democracy, insinuating that Irish Americans could not be loyal to their country while practicing their faith.[28]

Leaving immense hardship in Ireland for harsh discrimination in the United States, the narrative surrounding the Irish immigration experience was one of anguish and sorrow, and the language of exile dominated Irish emigres' identity. The imagery of forced exile was also pervasive among Irish newspapers and leaders, further emphasizing that migration was compelled by English tyranny. As late as 1977, an aging emigrant in San Francisco reinforced this narrative to historian Kerby Miller, saying, "We didn't want to leave Ireland, but we had to: the effects of centuries of English misrule forced the flight."[29] Ireland's poverty was a result of British misrule, and thus the large waves of immigration were artificially created by the British government. A unique attachment to the homeland inhibited immigrants' ability to adapt to American life, because many experienced an acute sense of homesickness. According to Miller,

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[27] Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (2003): 134-62; Thomas Nast, "The Usual Irish Way of Doing Things," Harper's Weekly, September 2, 1871, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum.
[28] Sean Connolly, "Patriotism and Nationalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[29] Kerby A. Miller, "Emigrants and Exiles: Irish Cultures and Irish Emigration to North America, 1790-1922," 100.

this deep-seated attachment translated to Irish Americans devoting much of their energy to "dreams and schemes to free Ireland." [30]

Irish separatist groups like the Fenian Brotherhood/Irish Republican Brotherhood developed a strong following among Irish famine emigres, providing a venue for their discontent and nationalism that only intensified the feeling of 'otherness' within the US. A popular Irish separatist and exile John Mitchell promulgated the theory that British mishandling of the potato blight was the equivalent of genocide in 1861. Despite no scholarly support for this claim, the notion spread like wildfire in the Irish diaspora. The most ardent of Irish American nationalists sought to aid the cause while still in North America by launching multiple military attacks on British Canada in 1867 and 1871.[31] Although most Irish Americans did not go to such extreme lengths or hold such deep-seated beliefs, a minority of the diaspora continually expressed their convictions. This resentment of perceived British wrongdoing against Ireland had an enduring quality, and second and third generation Irish Americans continued to revisit these narratives even as their personal connections to the island weakened. The diaspora continued to channel prominent narratives toward the eruption of violence in Northern Ireland almost a century later.

Irish Americans were transfixed with a very traditional understanding of Irish history, and they applied this rather dated conception to contemporary Irish politics. Meanwhile, life in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland had significantly changed from the conditions that precipitated mass emigration to North America in the 1840s or 1920s. Drawing on these themes, Irish Americans' perceptions of their ancestral homeland were often a reflection of what they had left, rather than the contemporary realities of the Republic and the North. For these

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[30] Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin: Field Day Press, 2008), 10.
[31] David Brundage, Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile, 1798-1998, 104-108.

reasons, Irish Americans were primed to support a radical terrorist organization to achieve the political goals of its diaspora in a way that Catholics in the south of Ireland were never compelled to. This politics of diaspora— specifically, how Irish emigres and their descendants envisioned and responded to political events in the homeland – is the guiding mechanism behind the United States' decades of involvement in Northern Ireland. Americans were interested in the Irish question, but "only on preconceived grounds and through the filter of their own experience."[32] Because Irish Americans only saw Northern Ireland through an inherited colonial lens, they neglected other vital aspects of the conflict. This conception of Ireland's problems as rooted in British imperialism without concern for the Protestant majority who also lived in Northern Ireland was problematic. Scots-Irish may have settled in Ulster at the behest of Queen Elizabeth I and Oliver Cromwell, but in the ensuing centuries the north of Ireland had become their home. Protestants overwhelmingly supported Northern Ireland's union with Great Britain, but they possessed their own ethnic identity and culture as well. Northern Ireland unionists were not English; by equating the two, republicans greatly oversimplified a complex situation. Getting the "Brits out" would not solve the strife between the two communities living in the province.

Furthermore, the long history of revolutionary groups supporting Irish nationalism and separatism within Ireland and North America gave credence to the Provisional IRA's message. The IRA's strategy of terrorism conformed with how Irish independence was achieved — it was not the constitutional Home Rule movement that brought freedom to the island, it was the Easter Rising surprise attack in Dublin and subsequent War for Independence (1919-1922). Therefore, the strategy of "the bomb and the bullet" seemed effective and consistent with historical efforts for Irish freedom, especially in the United States where knowledge of Irish politics lacked

[32] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 32.

nuance. The anticolonial frame through which American IRA supporters viewed the conflict even led them to compare the leaders of the IRA to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.[33] Irish officials serving in the United States recognized this tendency as problematic. When a handful of Americans cheered the IRA's presence on the streets of Derry and Belfast, one civil servant remarked, "Irish Americans have too long been prisoners of their own myths— ideas which may have been valid in the days of the Troubles from 1916 to 1922, but which are about as useful today as a broken umbrella in Donegal."[34]

From the earliest days of the conflict, Irish Americans reacted to trouble back "home" by confronting any British presence in the United States. The most extreme voices were heard the loudest. At a British military Tattoo of the Black Watch Regiment and Cold Stream Guards in Boston, a hostile group threw eggs at the marching band's uniforms.[35] A letter had been published in the *Boston Globe* a few days prior by the President of the Irish Republican Aid Committee, accusing the Black Watch of terrorizing and looting the people of Northern Ireland when it was stationed in the province. Some activists turned to direct engagement with Great Britain, drawing tactics and support from the wave of anti-imperial activism that emerged at the intersection of Civil Rights and Vietnam War protests. In 1972, the British Embassy in Washington and various consulates encountered a persistent "Irish squatter problem," in which activists would occupy the entranceway of the buildings. In the longest occupation, a group of Irish demonstrators, including four young children, occupied the British consulate in

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[33] Linda Charlton, "Fundraising by a Group in the U.S. Called Vital to I.R.A. Operations," The New York Times, September 24, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/24/archives/fundraising-by-a-group-in-us-called-vital-to-ira-operations.html.

[34] Transcript, Sean O'Huiginn Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/sean-ohuiginn-oral-history.

[35] Letter from Boston Consul General to A.R. Thomas Esq, British Ambassador in Washington, December 9, 1970, The National Archives.

Philadelphia for over one hundred hours. The protesters informed the Consulate that the sit-ins were intended to protest British imperialism in Northern Ireland. Considerable effort was exerted to devise a way to evict squatters without pressing charges, as procedure differed according to the local police department. The Embassy in Washington instructed consulates, "Since the demonstrators object will usually be to gain publicity and perhaps make martyrs of themselves, the request for police action should be delayed as long as seems possible."[36]

On the west coast, conversation surrounding Northern Ireland also emerged as a topic of concern, especially in San Francisco. In addition to the strong Irish American contingent, young liberal activists took up the cause of Northern Ireland under the banner of human rights. They opposed any British presence through letters to the editor in local newspapers and posting public signage. The first attempt to organize sustained opposition to British presence was Prince Charles' visit in 1977, but he was greeted with only one protester at the San Francisco airport.[37] A year later, however, a campaign against a British "Death Fleet" was successful in drawing in local politics against the British government. Public buses were plastered with posters calling Northern Ireland, "Britain's Vietnam," as eleven Royal Navy ships docked in the harbor. Irish groups pressured the mayor of San Francisco to oppose the visit of the Royal Navy, and the mayor refused to meet with the captain when asked by the British Chief of Protocol. The consulate later learned that the Mayor and Speaker of the California Assembly attended a luncheon held by militant Irish nationalists in which Jane Fonda spoke against injustices in Northern Ireland, quoting heavily from the Amnesty International report on treatment of

[36] Memo, "Demonstrations at British Government Offices," August 11, 1970, The National Archives.
[37] Associated Press, "Prince Charles Ends U.S. Visit on West Coast," The New York Times, October 29, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/10/30/archives/prince-charles-ends-us-visit-on-west-coast.html.

prisoners.[38] This type of organization, specifically the involvement of local elected officials, became a hallmark of Americans concerned about Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

In dealing with Irish Americans, or any Americans concerned with what was happening in Northern Ireland, a general British attitude of condescension accompanied their response. One letter entitled "The Irish Again" begins, "this is to bring you up to date on last week's demonstrations by the New York Irish, most of whom have never been nearer to Ireland than the Second Avenue Bogside Bar."[39] When the diplomatic corps informed the Foreign Office about the sit-ins, an official remarked they had been having "a somewhat tiresome time on and off with 'Irish' demonstrators (some with very non-Irish names)."[40] From their point of view, only certain British subjects could have valid opinions on the crisis in Northern Ireland, as Northern Ireland was a domestic issue, not one of foreign policy. British diplomats made an effort to educate Americans they saw as uninformed or not knowing any better, but the government saw Irish Americans as inhibiting their ability to effectively deal with conflict in Northern Ireland. As a result, British officials treated the concerns of the diaspora as a nuisance.

As they had throughout their history, Irish Americans disagreed. A plethora of diasporic organizations, both old and new, emerged to coordinate an Irish American response to the Troubles, illustrating the strength of the Irish American community. The Irish National Caucus became the umbrella organization for these groups in 1974, following the recent trend to formalize disparate ethnic lobbying groups to provide a unified voice for Irish-America on Capitol Hill. The INC encompasses the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the American Committee for Ulster Justice (ACUJ), and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The AOH and

[38] Letter from British Consulate General San Francisco to H.M. Ambassador Peter Jay, "IRA Front Activity in San Francisco," October 12, 1978, The National Archives.
[39] The National Archives.
[40] Memo, "Demonstrations at British Government Offices," August 11, 1970, The National Archives.

GAA have a storied history among Irish American circles, and the fact that respectable organizations associated with the INC lent a great deal of credibility to the group despite the fact that the INC often espoused a pro-IRA viewpoint. The display of unity by Irish America was convincing to those uninformed about Northern Ireland; even politicians ignorant of the conflict assumed the INC represented the Irish American monolith.

The formalization of Irish lobbying strengthened the staunchly nationalist tendencies of these diaspora organizations, giving them a platform from which they could frame national discussions of the Troubles. Ethnic newspapers, such as the *Irish Echo* and *Irish People*, provide a window into the goals of these organizations. These weekly papers billed themselves as the voice of Irish republicanism in the United States, and they provided political analysis on the Irish question and followed the activities of republican organizations in the United States.[41] A cover page of a 1974 issue of the *Irish People* shows a drawing of St. Patrick with the caption, "Hail glorious St Patrick, your love for old Erin has constantly burned, help us now, dear Saint, the snakes have returned!" The cartoon snakes at the feet of St. Patrick include the names of prominent Irish politicians advocating for constitutional nationalism, like SDLP MPs Gerry Fitt, John Hume, and Austin Currie, as well as ROI Taoisigh Liam Cosgrave, Jack Lynch, and Charles Haughey.[42] This political cartoon is indicative of the extreme position on the Irish question that condemned leaders seeking a political settlement instead of a united Ireland. The coordination of groups within the Irish National Caucus put dissenting moderate nationalists at a significant disadvantage in the arena of public opinion— the primary American voices heard on Northern Ireland operated in an echo chamber of extremism.

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[41] "The Irish People," Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Center for Digital Scholarship, http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/collections/IP.
[42] "Hail Glorious Patrick," *The Irish People*, March 16, 1974, http://ulib.iupuidigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/IP/id/7280/rec/88.

One of the most influential of these diasporic organizations was the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAID), which served as the American counterpart to Provisional Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. With their people under attack in Northern Ireland, Irish America coordinated what they ostensibly called relief to Catholic communities, but even the organizers admitted a portion of the funds went toward buying arms for the long war against Britain. Gun running became the first issue to involve the United States government in the Troubles. In these early years, the US was the principal source of guns for the Provisional IRA. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson once estimated that eighty-five percent of the IRA's weapons came from America.[43] Of the 10,000 weapons seized in the first decade of violence, 2,300 were American-made, with British officials assuming that many more were bought from other places and shipped to Ulster.[44] These actions were illegal under federal law, and officials from the Department of Justice prosecuted dozens of cases within the first four years of conflict. For example, the "Philadelphia Five" was one of the most prominent groups involved in gun running, and a detailed investigation was completed with US customs officials visiting their counterparts in Belfast. The five middle-aged Pennsylvania residents were charged with illegally acting as IRA agents for shipping 378 rifles and 140,000 rounds of ammunition, as well as attempting to buy rocket-launchers, mortars, and machine guns. The Irish government offered to spearhead the public education campaign against gun running in the US, as they felt that their word would have more weight to Irish Americans. However, the Foreign Office rejected this argument, reiterating that Northern Ireland was "HMG's responsibility and because

[43] Reuters, "5 Indicted in Philadelphia over Ulster Gun running," The New York Times, December 23, 1975, https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/23/archives/5-indicted-in-philadelphia-in-ulster-gunrunning-accused-americans.html.

[44] Linda Charlton, "Fundraising by a Group in the U.S. Called Vital to I.R.A. Operations," The New York Times, September 24, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/24/archives/fundraising-by-a-group-in-us-called-vital-to-ira-operations.html.

the Irish do not have the information resources effectively to do the job."[45] From 1969 to 1975, the problem of gun running consumed the discussion of Northern Ireland in the United States.

By 1975, the level of arms transports to Ireland had significantly reduced due to effective prosecution by the DOJ. It is a common misconception that American support funded the Provisional IRA throughout the Troubles, but U.S. aid was pivotal only in the early years. Once the second decade of the conflict arrived, the paramilitary organization had found more lucrative sources of funding from foreign states, including Libya under the dictator Moammar Ghaddafi. As early as 1973, IRA volunteers were receiving and transporting weapons from the Libyan government, and this connection was strengthened in the 1980s after the American sources of funding declined.[46] Despite the mitigation of gunrunning by the late 1970s, the United Kingdom continued to speak of the issue as if it was the government's most pressing diplomatic concern as a way to denigrate the IRA's American sympathizers and alienate moderate supporters of Irish nationalism. This was solely because of the issue's political utility— it was obvious that Americans were concerned about Northern Ireland, and they pressed the US government to get involved. British diplomats told US officials the best way they could help Northern Ireland was to prosecute gun running to divert attention from the other types of actions that Irish Americans were advocating for. By focusing on the need to prosecute gun running, the question of whether the US government should become more involved with Northern Ireland was diverted.

Needless to say, the British government had an image problem regarding Northern Ireland, and much of its public diplomacy during this era was fixated on exposing groups like NORAID and the INC as front groups for the IRA, and to emphasize the damage these

[45] Memo, Secretary of State's Meeting with Sir Peter Rathsbotham, "Fundraising for PIRA in the United States," December 16, 1976, The National Archives.
[46] Richard English, Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 249.

organizations were causing in the north. For example, British representatives attended panel discussions, some hosted by IRA-sympathizing groups, in an attempt to spread the government's perspective and balance the narrative that was emerging in the United States. However, British Information Services refrained from directly appealing to Irish American groups and newspapers, as they believed that confrontation would backfire.[47] They decided that die-hard republicans were a lost cause, as they could not to be reasoned with.

Instead, the Embassy carefully tracked national news coverage of Northern Ireland to understand how the wider American audience perceived the conflict, searching for opportune publicity. Thus, the British sponsored US visits for moderate Northern Ireland politicians like John Hume and other civilians who could speak to the reality of the Troubles. Bishop Edward Daly was made famous from the violence of Bloody Sunday, in which he was recorded ministering the last rites to a dying seventeen-year-old boy. Coverage of his actions appeared in American news broadcasts and articles at the time in one of the most gripping images of the conflict.[48] In 1975, Bishop Daly traveled to the US to speak to a branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in New Jersey, informing them "the Ireland of Hollywood, of Maureen O'Sullivan and Barry Fitzgerald, never really existed and is dead even out there."[49]

These types of interactions were successful in educating uninformed spectators, but the reach of these exercises was limited. Seven years into the conflict, the degree of support for the IRA, was staggeringly high. In 1975, Prime Minister Harold Wilson gave his "Blood on the

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[47] Letter from D. Walker to J.N. Allan, Esq, "Irish National Caucus," in "Northern Ireland Relations with the United States of America (USA), Foreign/Commonwealth Policy, May 30, 1975, The National Archives.
[48] "Bishop Edward Daly: Photo journalist recalls 'unforgettable scene'," British Broadcasting Corporation, August 9, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-37020493.
[49] "Derry Bishop Declares: Mythology of Irish Americans No Help in Ireland's Troubles," *The Pilot*, March 14, 1975, The National Archives.

Shamrock" speech in an attempt to drive home the consequences of ill-conceived Irish American fundraising:

> Those who subscribe to the Irish Northern Aid Committee are not financing the welfare of the Irish people, as they might delude themselves. They are financing murder. When they contribute their dollars for the old country, they are not helping their much-loved shamrock to flower. They are splashing blood on it. Nor are they helping the minority Catholic population.

The shamrock analogy alludes to the quest for Irish unity, then Wilson turns to plain language: buying bombs and bullets does not make your beloved homeland any safer. Wilson's speech reiterated the chasm separating the realities of Northern Ireland from the outdated myths that spurred Irish American support for civil war. This campaign to educate Irish Americans on the reality of Northern Ireland would persist, but the British government was not the best messenger. Instead, it would take leading Irish Americans to challenge the pervasive, antiquated militant republican thinking with the help of Irish, American, and Northern Ireland politicians. The story of America's relationship with the Troubles revolves around this tension: which governments had a legitimate claim to contribute to reaching a political settlement in Northern Ireland, and whose influence could actually temper support for militant nationalism in the United States?

In addition to the British public diplomacy effort in the United States, the place of the Irish government in connecting with Irish Americans was uncertain. The violence occurring in the north was deeply concerning to the Republic, and the Irish government felt it could play a productive role. Amidst the lobbying in the United States, Irish officials were caught in the middle: Irish Americans considered the ROI traitors to the cause of a united Ireland for its rejection of IRA violence, while the British government opposed any Irish involvement in

Northern Ireland, especially as it related to the US. To make matters worse, the government of the Republic of Ireland was not very active in the United States, obscuring the reality that most people in Ireland did not yearn for a united island. The Republic of Ireland's government was so chaotic in the early years of the Troubles, especially from 1969-1971, that there was no actor outlining an alternative policy from the IRA republican stance. As civil servant Sean Donlon explained, the lack of a policy coming from Dublin left Irish diplomats incapable of taking any substantive position on the issue. In fact, Donlon remembers the Boston Consulate was even afraid to tell Irish Americans to stop fundraising for the IRA for fear of alienating American IRA sympathizers. Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern has observed that even if the Irish government had coordinated a strong public diplomacy effort, "the story that we would have said when we go to America isn't sexy. It isn't Bomb the Brits out."[50] Former Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern spoke to the distortion of Irish politics from America, saying, "If you had a clean slate, my party (Fianna Fáil), which by far is the biggest party, we average 35 to 40 percent of the vote. There's no other party in Europe that gets as big a vote. . . Yet if you go to America, my party isn't mentioned in America. It's Sinn Féin."[51] Thus, the Irish government was the best official source to discredit the IRA narrative as unrepresentative of the majority in Ireland, but British opposition and disorganized government policy prevented the GOI from having an impact in the United States up until 1977.

A common theme throughout British relations with the United States in the twentieth century is an underlying fear of Irish America causing the USG to turn its back on the special

[50] Transcript, Dermot Ahern Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/dermot-ahern-oral-history.
[51] Transcript, Bertie Ahern Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/bertie-ahern-oral-history.

relationship. This theme was the defining point of contention in US policy toward Northern Ireland. Irish Foreign Minister Garret Fitzgerald recalled that British Foreign Secretary, David Anthony Llewellyn Owen told him as much later on in the Troubles, sharing the one thing that concerned the British government was American intervention.[52] The fear originated during World War I, when the British were pushing for the United States to enter the war against Germany. After the British government executed the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916, Irish America, "then at its zenith as a political force," delayed American involvement for another year.[53] The Irish American diaspora served as Ireland's domestic lobbying force, and the British feared another successful Irish lobbying effort would translate to a loss of American support for its policies in Northern Ireland.

In the early years of the Troubles, American government policy was in direct contrast to the demands of the Irish American lobby. The policy of the Nixon and later Ford administrations was to quietly support the British government, but to avoid any public mention of the increasing violence taking over the province. A number of factors contributed to this decision. Richard Nixon's approach to foreign affairs was overwhelmingly pragmatic; the overriding consideration for the president was the UK's elevated stature in its Cold War alliance network. Domestic discord in a backwater province of Ireland was a marginal issue as Nixon pursued detente with the Soviet Union, prosecuted the war in Vietnam, and normalized relations with the People's Republic of China. President Nixon would not benefit from fixating on a small issue; rather, it may distract from the larger international issues that the US needed the UK's support on. An

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[52] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history-prime-minister-ireland.

[53] David Murray, "The Irish American Stake," *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1977/09/04/the-irish-american-stake/0815e7d8-c159-4939-af5c-0843be163f33/.

Anglophile himself, Nixon saw the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland as a domestic issue that Great Britain was entitled to handle on its own terms. If the roles were reversed, Nixon would definitely have asserted the privilege of sovereignty as well. When President Nixon visited Ireland in 1960, his advance team chose to visit the republic without taking a trip to the north. Assuming power amidst the Watergate scandal, Gerald Ford retained most of Nixon's foreign policy team, most prominently Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State. Consumed by domestic issues, Ford's administration was not focused on the international sphere aside from big ticket items like the Helsinki Accords and SALT. The policy of discrete preference for the British position while publicly maintaining impartiality was consistent throughout Nixon and Ford's presidencies.

In direct contrast to Irish American gun running in support of the Provisional IRA, the United States government was arming its opponent: the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force of Northern Ireland dominated by unionists. Whenever the United Kingdom would put in a request to buy M1 carbines for its security forces, an export license had to be issued by the Department of State. The sale of arms to the Royal Ulster Constabulary continued to be a point of contention, with the State Department dragging its feet on issuing the necessary license to sell to the United Kingdom throughout the decade. Officials at the Department of State were aware of the negative reaction they would receive if the sale became public, so the USG issued licenses as discreetly as possible. Again, the British anxiety over Irish and American involvement is visible on the issue of arms sales. One Foreign Office document reasoned, "the one thing which might lead the Irish government to intervene unhelpfully would be if this became a subject of

public controversy between ourselves and the Americans. But, provided the US administration treat this as a routine matter, the Irish are unlikely to criticize any decision to issue licenses."[54]

As the Troubles persisted, the United States policy toward Northern Ireland began to be questioned, for the position of the US government was directly at odds with the wishes of many Irish-Americans. The British government, intent on maintain the special relationship as it related to Ireland, attempted to combat IRA misinformation and obstruct the Irish government from making diplomatic headway.

[54] Letter from British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, "M1 Carbines for the RUC," March 23, 1977, The National Archives.

Chapter II: The Education of Irish America

The competition between the Irish diaspora and British diplomats for the support of the American government gained a forum in the United States Congress, and this bureaucratic platform is where the product of Irish American advocacy became most visible. As the 1970s wore on and the Justice Department effectively curtailed American gun running, Irish Americans turned to constituent advocacy to promote a US policy that was more critical of British actions and supportive of the Irish republican cause. For the most part, only the loudest, most extreme voices on the issue were heard at the federal level, and Congressmen adopted the position of their constituents. By supporting withdrawal of British troops to facilitate a united Ireland, members of Congress were espousing the views of the Provisional IRA. All of the representatives that were concerned with Northern Ireland voiced that concern in the language of human rights— citizens were being detained indefinitely without trial, prisoners alleged torture in prisons, and Catholics complained of police discrimination. So, as American politicians became aware of their constituents' attention to Northern Ireland, they began to utilize their position to speak out, but without a strong grounding of the facts. The idea that the US Congress would devote its attention to criticizing the British policy in Northern Ireland through hearings and investigations, and even renounce America support for its actions, was the United Kingdom's greatest fear and preoccupation.

The first Congressional hearing on Northern Ireland was conducted by the European Subcommittee of the International Relations Committee in 1972 regarding Bloody Sunday.[55] By the introduction of internment without trial in 1971, Senator Ted Kennedy and other representatives were frustrated by the lack of political progress, so they put Northern Ireland on

[55] Letter from AL Free-Gore to Mr. Mallet, 18 August 1978, The National Archives.

the Congressional agenda. But Kennedy's understanding of the dynamics in the early days of violence mirrored that of most Americans, and his message echoed the Irish National Caucus' militant vision. Together with Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Representative Hugh Carey in the House, Kennedy introduced a resolution calling for immediate British withdrawal from the province and the establishment of a united Ireland. In his speech to the Senate, Kennedy oscillated between moderate language, advocating for American pressure to bring peace to the island, and more sensationalist claims like, "the Government of Ulster rules by bayonet and bloodshed." He argued that the strength of ties between the two nations made the American aversion toward intervention a moot point. The most noteworthy part of the speech was Kennedy's claim that "Ulster is Britain's Vietnam."[56] The comparison was intended to put the conflict in a familiar frame of reference for the American public. Indeed, many American journalists began to adopt the Ulster/Vietnam analogy and its symbolism permeated almost every major American news broadcast.[57] Activists had made the impression that Northern Ireland was something the US should be attentive to, and the United Kingdom should be ashamed of.

The Senator's Vietnam analogy also supported the resolution's primary argument: the British should withdraw from Ulster to avoid a military quagmire that would fuel further violence. The Ribicoff-Kennedy legislation suggested that British withdrawal would bring immediate peace to the six counties, and without a removal of troops, violence would never end in Northern Ireland. This logic failed to account for the majority of the population who wanted the British military supporting the provincial government; the unionist community would not simply relinquish power or acquiesce to the united Ireland republicans were seeking. This crucial

[56] Senator Edward N. Kennedy, Speaking on S. 180, Resolution relating to the violence in Northern Ireland, on October 20, 1971, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 117, pt. 28:36972-4.
[57] Ken Ward, "The US Network News Coverage of Northern Ireland, 1968-79," in Y. Alexander and A. O'Day, eds., Irish Terrorism (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 207-9.

misconception was not only made by fervid Irish Americans, but also by the Provisional Irish Republican Army itself.

UK leaders roundly condemned the legislation's ignorance. Prime Minister for Northern Ireland Brian Faulkner stated Kennedy, "has shown himself willing to swallow hook, line and sinker the hoary old propaganda that IRA atrocities are carried out as part of a freedom fight on behalf of the Northern Irish people" and accused him of "playing American politics with Ulster people's lives." A columnist for the *London Times* claimed Kennedy's "assertion that the U.S. was entitled to intervene because of the Irish contributions to American culture" amounted to "an ethnic Brezhnev doctrine." A Conservative MP introduced a motion in the House of Commons questioning the Senator's suitability "for expressing moral judgments on anything" in reference to the 1969 Chappaquiddick incident.[58] Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath commented, "It is regrettable that the Senator should have given vent to such an ignorant outburst."[59] Kennedy stood firm in an op-ed response to the *Times of London*, suggesting the indignant reaction was a result of Britain's guilty conscience.[60] Needless to say, Ted Kennedy was no friend of Britain's in the early years of the Troubles, but the statements had a similar reception in Irish circles. Taoiseach Jack Lynch commented to the *Washington Post* that Kennedy did not have a full grasp of the situation, and a leading Fine Gael TD went further, calling him a "bloody nuisance" and wishing "he would just shut up."[61] Despite well-intentioned efforts to elevate

[58] "Northern Ireland: Off the Deep End," *Time Magazine*, November 1, 1971, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,905478,00.html.
[59] "Heath Criticizes Kennedy," *The New York Times*, October 27, 1971, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/10/27/archives/heath-criticizes-kennedy.html.
[60] "Kennedy has come a long way on Northern Ireland," *The Irish Times*, January 9, 1998, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/kennedy-has-come-a-long-way-on-north-1.122480.
[61] "Kennedy has come a long way on Northern Ireland," *The Irish Times*, January 9, 1998, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/kennedy-has-come-a-long-way-on-north-1.122480.

American consciousness, Kennedy and other Irish American politicians were seen as a liability to progress for the British and Irish governments.

The idea that one of America's closest allies could be committing gross human rights violations weighed heavily on the minds of Congressmen. Democratic Representative Benjamin Rosenthal pushed Donald Fraser, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, to revive the Northern Ireland hearings after a five-year hiatus in 1977. He wrote to the Chairman explaining that the two-year full-scale review of compliance with the Helsinki accords would serve as an important indicator of the Cold War rhetorical battle for supremacy over human rights. The Soviet Union was expected to cite reports of grave human rights abuses in Northern Ireland as a counterpoint to western charges of abuse in the communist bloc. Just a year prior, the Human Rights Commission of the Council of Europe found the United Kingdom guilty of violating the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Alleged human rights violations related to five sensory deprivation tactics used during interrogations:

(a) wall-standing: forcing the detainees to remain for periods of some hours in a "stress position," described by those who underwent it as being "spreadeagled against the wall, with their fingers put high above the head against the wall, the legs spread apart and the feet back, causing them to stand on their toes with the weight of the body mainly on the fingers";

(b) hooding: putting a black or navy colored bag over the detainees' heads and, at least initially, keeping it there all the time except during interrogation;

(c) subjection to noise: pending their interrogations, holding the detainees in a room where there was a continuous loud and hissing noise;

(d) deprivation of sleep: pending their interrogations, depriving the detainees of sleep;

(e) deprivation of food and drink: subjecting the detainees to a reduced diet during their stay at the center and pending interrogations.[62]

Failure on the part of the United States to investigate or police the British would severely weaken their argument of supremacy in the realm of human rights. In his letter to Fraser, Rosenthal voiced this argument, saying, "It would indeed be unfortunate if American ignorance of the deprivation of human rights among our allies should provide the justification for such behavior in the communist world."[63] Donald Fraser was the most vocal proponent of human rights in the House, representing the most formidable potential critic of British hypocrisy. Fraser desired hearings on Northern Ireland in 1977 but was prevented from doing so by House Leadership and the State Department. Once he decided to run for Senate in 1978, his efforts to bring attention to Northern Ireland in the Subcommittee on International Relations ceased. Another official Congressional forum considering Northern Ireland was Chairman Lee Hamilton's Committee on Europe and the Middle East, who proposed the review as part of a broader scrutiny of United States international relations. Hamilton was more favorable to the British perspective, but the UK feared other members had the potential to stir up trouble. Speaker O'Neill also denied hearings in May 1978.

In addition to representatives with genuine concern for human rights, one Congressmen emerged as willing to exploit concern for Northern Ireland for political gain. Representative Mario Biaggi, an Italian American representing an overwhelmingly Italian constituency, was an unlikely voice on human rights abuses by the British government. Sources on Capitol Hill and

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[62] *Ireland v. The United Kingdom*, 5310/71, Council of Europe: European Court of Human Rights, December 13, 1977, United Nations High Commission on Refugees, https://www.refworld.org/cases,ECHR,3ae6b7004.html.
[63] Letter from Benjamin Rosenthal to Donald Fraser, August 2, 1977, The National Archives.

British officials alike described Biaggio as a "political opportunist" who previously held little weight on the matter.[64] When repeated attempts to create a Northern Ireland committee were stonewalled by House leadership, he established an unofficial Committee on Ireland in September 1977. The political opportunism was most prominently on display through Biaggi's exaggerated support for his unofficial committee, at various points claiming he had support from one-hundred and six out of five-hundred members of Congress. It became obvious that representatives agreed to join the Committee without understanding the underlying message of Biaggi's language or the Irish National Caucus' support for the Provisional IRA. The fact that Biaggi's committee could attract so much support in Congress exposed the degree of ignorance surrounding violence in Northern Ireland on Capitol Hill. The committee's formal aims were to draw attention to human rights violations committed by Britain; reverse the State Department's policy of reusing visas to individuals associated with the Provisional IRA; and to make President Carter more aware of the situation. Though the committee's aims seem well intended, they belie the more militant views of the Irish National Caucus.

A key point of contention with Biaggi's efforts was his claim that the committee denounced all forms of violence in Northern Ireland, despite its affiliation with Jack Keane, leader of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and, more suspect, the Irish National Caucus. British, Irish, and Justice Department officials all asserted the INC was the IRA's political lobbying wing in the United States. In a quote to the *New York Times* on the INC caucus support for the Provos, Biaggi seemed unconcerned with the poor optics, "Look, every cause has its extremists, right? It's the cause, not the advocates. A wild advocacy doesn't diminish the cause. If people can't

[64] Letter from AL Free-Gore to Mr. Mallet, 18 August 1978, The National Archives.

discredit the message, they discredit the messenger. Believe me, it doesn't bother me."[65] Regardless of what Biaggi believed about his own intentions, he chose to align himself with the most extreme advocates for Ireland, instead of the more moderate ones. Biaggi received a public rebuke from the Irish Taoiseach over his antics on the unofficial sub-committee. Biaggi wrote to the prime minister, commending his comments on Northern Ireland. However, the Congressman mistakenly interpreted the Taoiseach's public comments, thinking the prime minister had called for an immediate withdrawal of British troops. Jack Lynch wrote a public letter to Biaggi, taking the opportunity to speak out against the misguided nature of the Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs. Lynch explains that the Irish National Caucus, despite its insistence to the contrary, is associated with the Provisional IRA, and therefore supports violence as a solution to the problems in Northern Ireland. He also notes that the INC viewed the creation of Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs as a "victory for itself," ending by saying that Irish authorities have noted Biaggi's public affiliation with, "supporters of violence who have no democratic mandate from our people."[66] Jack Lynch's statement is meaningful for a number of reasons. First, the decision of a sitting head of government to devote time toward a letter like Biaggi's is indicative of the seriousness with which the ROI saw from ill-intentioned or misguided efforts by the Irish American diaspora. Moreover, the decision to rebuke a sitting Congressmen demonstrated the lengths the Irish government was willing to go to, potentially causing diplomatic friction with the USG, to inform the American public of the reality of the situation. Not only was Lynch admonishing Biaggi, he was condemning the largest organization to represent Irish America. It is

[65] Bernard Weinraub, "Lobby Linked to I.R.A. Asserts It's Gaining Support in Congress," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/21/archives/lobby-linked-to-ira-asserts-its-gaining-support-in-congress-130.html.
[66] Letter from Lynch to Biaggi, February 17, 1978, in "Ireland and US Policy on Northern Ireland," TAOIS/2009/135/745, The National Archives of Ireland.

clear that the Irish American lobby posed a serious impediment to ending the violence in Northern Ireland.

The Four Horsemen

The major impetus for change in the political calculus on Northern Ireland was precipitated by Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy and his "Four Horsemen" colleagues: Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, New York Governor Hugh Carey, and New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. When the Four Horsemen decisively entered the conversation in the late 1970s, a chasm existed between interested parties on both sides of the Atlantic, and the United States was receiving two contrasting narratives that belied the complexity of the situation. Firstly, the British government's focus was on reducing terrorism and sectarian violence, yet the use of internment and suspect questioning tactics delegitimized HMG's cause. Meanwhile, the Provisional IRA was employing traditional republican discourse that harkened back to the War for Irish Independence. Throughout the Nixon and Ford administrations, the United States government was firmly in Britain's corner; while many Irish Americans saw the Provos' guerrilla warfare as consistent with historical efforts for an independent, united Ireland. Neither view encompassed the reality in Northern Ireland.

Thus, the Four Horsemen were well placed as leaders in American politics to fill this vacuum and bring a nuanced perspective to the conflict. They took a centrist, compromising stance on the Irish question to bring more radical elements into the fold. However, the Four Horsemen were not always moderate on the "Irish question." Sean Donlon, the Irish Consul General in Boston from 1969-1971, later reflected, "In 1969, even people who became phenomenal supporters — Tip O'Neill, Ted Kennedy, and Hugh Carey — were inclined to look

towards what became the Provisional IRA. That was their first instinct."[67] This instinct reflected their traditional Irish upbringing.

Ted Kennedy emerged as the leading voice of the Four Horsemen early on. Despite the Anglophilia of his elder brother John, Kennedy had a strong affinity for his Irish roots. Growing up as the youngest child of the Kennedy clan, he had a closer relationship with his grandfather, John Francis 'Honey Fitz' Fitzgerald, than his older siblings. Kennedy spent the weekends with Fitzgerald while at boarding school, where the first Irish mayor of Boston imparted a deep love for Irish history and tradition, as well as an understanding of the historical prejudice against the Irish in America.

With this upbringing in mind, Kennedy took an interest in the situation in Northern Ireland from the earliest days of violence. When civil rights demonstrations began to pick up momentum in 1969, the Senator sent an encouraging telegram to the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. He then met with the activists during a visit to the United States. But these initial efforts were private ones, and some Americans wanted Kennedy to take a public stand against the state's oppression of the Catholic minority. While traveling in London, an Irish woman approached Kennedy, drawing a parallel between the 1970 Kent State shootings and Bloody Sunday in Derry. If the Senator felt the need to issue a statement condemning police violence at Kent State, she reasoned, why was he silent on Northern Ireland?[68] The Senator often cited this interaction as a galvanizing moment in his involvement with Northern Ireland.

A later incident brought the conflict to a personal level for the Senator. The Provisional IRA carried out attacks in England as a way of accelerating British support for the withdrawal of

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[68] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 32.

troops. If British civilians were targeted by the long war, the thinking went, that suffering would be more effective in persuading Westminster to accede to the Provos' demands. The IRA also targeted the politicians they saw as instrumental in the British policy on Northern Ireland, most famously Margaret Thatcher. In 1975, the Provisional IRA planted a car bomb in Campden Hill Square, London, which was discovered by Gordon-Hamilton Fairley. Fairley accidentally detonated the bomb, killing him and his two dogs instantly. The IRA intended the bomb to target Fairley's neighbor, Conservative MP Sir Hugh Fraser. Caroline Kennedy was staying with the Fraser family for an art course at Sotheby's, and she was an intended passenger in the car that morning. The UK Foreign Office saw this attack as an opportunity to delegitimize the IRA in the United States. The US Ambassador to the UK, Elliot Richardson, was asked to approach Ted Kennedy to issue a statement condemning IRA fundraising in the United States, but the Senator demurred.[69] It seems Kennedy was hesitant to use his platform if it meant associating with the British government; his other actions would still elicit the accusation by Irish Americans of Kennedy as a "British lackey."[70]

While Kennedy emerged as the public face of Irish American opinion, he had a counterpart in the House in the form of fellow Bostonian Thomas "Tip" O'Neill. While O'Neill had always been deeply committed to Ireland, he began to make a sustained political effort for Northern Ireland once he assumed the Speakership of the House of Representatives. Irish Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald found Tip O'Neill's republican views toward Ireland deeply ingrained. The grandson of Irish immigrants, O'Neill was taught by his father to never forget where you came from — the heavily Irish Catholic enclave of Little Dublin in North Cambridge,

[69] Note for the Record on Meeting with Ambassador Elliot Richardson, 15/1/1976, IRA fundraising in the USA, FCO 87/577, The National Archives.
[70] "Kennedy has come a long way on Northern Ireland," *The Irish Times*, January 9, 1998, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/kennedy-has-come-a-long-way-on-north-1.122480.

Massachusetts. In his memoir, he remembers how deeply Irish heritage influenced his neighborhood:

> We had a tremendous hatred for the English... Each year on Easter Sunday, men of our neighborhood would go from door to door, collecting for the IRA. On the front window of almost every house you would see a sticker: "I gave to the Army."[71]

The presence of IRA affiliations in Irish Boston neighborhoods was not an uncommon one. Tip O'Neill was a young boy as the cause of Irish nationalism reached its apex; events like the Easter Rising, War for Independence, and Anglo-Irish Treaty were followed closely by Irish American communities like his.

He internalized this attitude and applied it to politics. As a freshman Congressman, he advocated for a united Ireland and later recalled supporting the Irish Republican Army's border campaign in the 1950s, telling CBS, "I always gave to the cause of the IRA because I thought it was the right thing to do".[72] [73] As civil rights demonstrations grew and ethnic strife reached a fever pitch in 1969, O'Neill wrote to Secretary of State William Rogers, "The policy of the government of Ulster is one of absolute discrimination and deprivation of the rights of the Catholic minority...The present course of the Unionist government can only lead to civil war." He also gathered the signatures of one-hundred and two Congressional colleagues urging the Nixon administration to advocate on the behalf of Catholic marchers to the British government. In a response by aide Bryce Harlow, the administration reiterated its belief that involvement in Northern Ireland was a violation of sovereignty and would be harmful rather than constructive. President Nixon stood firmly behind the British government and rejected O'Neill's request.

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[71] Tip O'Neill, *Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1987), 8.
[72] John Aloysius Farrell, *Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 510. Report on *CBS News* by Mike Lee and Martin Kalb, 23 October 1977.

After Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972, Representative O'Neill introduced a resolution in the House much like the Ribicoff-Kennedy legislation tabled the year prior. In addition to the traditional calls for British troop withdrawal and a united Ireland, the Democratic Whip also demanded an international inquiry into Bloody Sunday deaths and an end to internment without trial. O'Neill's resolution for an international inquiry into Bloody Sunday, in particular, inspired Congressional hearings on Northern Ireland in the House of Representatives.

In addition to the political heavyweights of Kennedy and O'Neill, Hugh Carey held significant sway representing a New York Irish-American constituency. Hugh Carey was an activist on Northern Ireland from the earliest days of the conflict. As a member of the American Committee for Ulster Justice, Carey traveled to Northern Ireland in 1971 to investigate human rights conditions, especially relating to torture of interned inmates. Upon his return, he shared stories of physical abuse to Ted Kennedy, and the pair sponsored the Ribicoff-Kennedy resolution shortly after. Following Bloody Sunday in January 1972, Carey initiated Congressional hearings on Northern Ireland as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.[74] There is no question that an interest in the "Irish question" was as much good politics as moral courage. Once Carey announced his candidacy for the New York gubernatorial race in 1974, this tendency became even more apparent — he received endorsements from all of the major Irish republican associations. Carey also gave a republican eulogy for Michael Gaugan, a republican who died on hunger strike in England.[75] In New York politics, courting the republican Irish diaspora was essential for success.

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[74] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history-prime-minister-ireland.

[75] Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish-America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 131.

Rounding out the Four Horseman was Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In contrast to Kennedy and O'Neill, whose Irishness had always been central to their personal and public identities, Moynihan's relationship with Ireland was more academic than political during the early years of violence. Moynihan was asked by Nathan Glazer, a sociologist studying ethnicity, to write a chapter on Irish America for his book entitled, "Beyond the Melting Pot: the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City." Moynihan's study describes the 'trinity' of identity predetermined as immigrants arrived in New York: Irish-Catholic-Democrats. He notes the persistence of Irish identity generations after emigration, and the gulf between the identity of the diaspora versus the Irish homeland. For example, Moynihan recognizes the romantic notions of nationalism present within the diaspora, citing the "tendency, apparent from the time of O'Connell, for Irish-Americans to be more extreme in their attitudes toward England than their native Irish .[76] Moynihan's observations made in 1963 proved prescient for the American dynamics regarding the breakout of the Troubles.

Due to his position as a public servant under the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations, Moynihan was not involved in the early years like Kennedy, O'Neill, and Carey. Yet, upon assuming office in January 1977, the Foreign Office had labeled Moynihan a "dangerous man" as it related to Northern Ireland.[77] Those in Whitehall believed his inclination to hold Congressional hearings would provide IRA sympathizers with a dangerous platform. Additionally, reports circulated that Moynihan had suggested to include support for a united Ireland in the Democratic Party's 1976 campaign platform.[78] No clauses of this nature were

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[76] Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963), 243.
[77] Note of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Mr. John Hume held at Stormont Castle at 5:30pm on 18th January 1977, CJ4/1845, The National Archives.
[78] Attachments to letter from J. Davidson to M. Hodge, RID, FCO, 6/17/1976, Amendments on Ireland Proposed and Rejected at Democratic Party Platform Meeting, in US Presidential Election and Northern Ireland, The National Archives.

included in the finalized version. Although Moynihan was the least influential in the early years of the Four Horsemen, his continued presence in the Senate led to significant achievements toward peace in the 1990s, such as the issue of visas to IRA members. Furthermore, the weight of Carey and Moynihan's inclusion in the Four Horsemen represented a considerable portion of the active Irish American constituency, giving the actions of the group more prominence throughout the country and especially on the east coast.

Thus, the Four Horsemen held the same traditional republican views that Irish America writ large held: the British presence in Ireland was the problem, and the only solution was a united Ireland. As mentioned previously, this was an idealistic understanding that did not solve the violence gripping the province. However, the Four Horsemen's contact with a Northern Ireland politician advocating for constitutional nationalism, rather than nationalism through military force, convinced the group to adopt a new perspective and message for Irish America.

John Hume and Moderate Irish Nationalism

John Hume was essential in reforming the Four Horsemen's perception of the problems and feasible solutions for Northern Ireland. Hume realized that the Irish connection in the United States was not fully utilized. Grassroots support existed in the United States since the 1916 Easter Rising, but despite this strength in numbers, the diaspora had not translated this strength to mobilize the levers of power. Advocates for American involvement needed to harness the apparatus of the federal government in order to have any type of sway on American policy. Sean Donlon, the Irish Consul General in Boston from 1969-1971, explained, "John [Hume] began to form the view that organized as it was, Irish-America was not the route to power."[79] So, Hume

[79] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 32.

focused his attention on Washington. Rectifying the misconceptions on Capitol Hill represented John Hume's primary task: he sought to nuance Congressional leaders' understanding of the situation in Northern Ireland, and to utilize the power of the Four Horsemen to temper grassroots support for the armed struggle in the United States.

Hume played a pivotal role in educating Ted Kennedy on the realities of Northern Ireland beginning in late 1972. About two months after Bloody Sunday, Senator Kennedy requested to meet with Hume while he attended a NATO conference in Bonn. The civil rights leader had established himself as a principled and visionary advocate for the Catholic community. Senator Kennedy later cited Hume's decision to lay in front of a tank, facing death, as the impetus for their meeting. Hume recognized the opportunity to speak to one of the most influential politicians in Washington as paramount toward gaining international support for his message. He borrowed money from his credit union to pay for airfare, and the Irish Embassy allowed him to stay at the ambassador's residence. As the Senator described it, "that's where John began the great education of Edward Kennedy about Northern Ireland."[80] In their conversation, Hume offered an alternative to the bomb and the bullet, one that Kennedy could adopt and advocate himself. The idea that peace could only be brought to Northern Ireland through unity among different communities, rather than change implemented by one political party, was also a new concept to the Senator. Afterwards, Kennedy remarked to the Irish ambassador, "that's the man I will listen to."[81] Once the two had established contact in a meaningful way, Kennedy's public statements became more nuanced and constructive. This pivotal meeting would set the tone for a new political initiative in the United States.

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[80] Edward M. Kennedy Oral History, March 20, 2006, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/edward-m-kennedy-oral-history-3202006.

[81] Edward M. Kennedy Oral History, March 20, 2006, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/edward-m-kennedy-oral-history-3202006.

Due to the Nixon and Ford administration's official policy of silence on Northern Ireland, Kennedy's space for action was limited. However, the prospect of a unified government under the Democratic party presented new opportunities— 1976 was a pivotal year for American involvement in Northern Ireland. The pair were able to solidify their partnership when Hume received a fellowship with the Harvard University's Center for International Relations in the autumn of 1976. Equipped with new language to discuss and persuade Americans on Northern Ireland, Kennedy sought a strong coalition to counter American support for the IRA. However, the other Horsemen were a step behind Kennedy in their intellectual involvement in Northern Ireland. Tip O'Neill had trouble adjusting to a more balanced policy on Northern Ireland given the presence of IRA support going back to his upbringing. Like O'Neill, Hugh Carey held traditional republican support for a united Ireland. Kennedy was intent on persuading them to take a more nuanced view of the picture, and he made sure his colleagues heard the reality from the horse's mouth: John Hume. A residence in Cambridge placed Hume in the heart of Tip O'Neill's constituency, and Kennedy ensured the two met during O'Neill's weekend trips home, along with Hugh Carey.[82]

Diplomats representing the Republic of Ireland also supported Hume's travels to Washington D.C., where Hume would attend Georgetown parties with political influencers. Hume's informal and social interactions were just as effective as his trips to the Hill. In relaxed settings, Hume became a storyteller for his hometown of Derry. He would describe forty-seven percent unemployment and social problems, explaining how the province's bleak future spurred young people toward the violence. Kennedy's aide Paul Kirk, a participant in these social gatherings and later Senator for Massachusetts, described Hume as a "transformative thought

[82] Edward M. Kennedy Oral History, March 20, 2006, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/edward-m-kennedy-oral-history-3202006.

leader." Kennedy would often refer to Hume as the "101st Senator of the United States," underscoring the substantial clout he accrued during his stays in Boston and Washington. [83] With Hume dictating the agenda, editing Kennedy's speeches, and advising the Four Horsemen of the realities in Northern Ireland, the pair were able to elevate the American political class' knowledge of the conflict, which ultimately contributed to US involvement in the eventual peace process.

By outlining a path forward centered on reconciliation, peace, and political progress, the Four Horsemen were able to adopt a new platform and elevate it to the halls of power on Capitol Hill and the White House. The Four Horsemen's first public action was to issue a Northern Ireland statement on St. Patrick's Day to decisively support constitutional nationalism. The primary aim of the Four Horsemen's St Patrick's Day statement was to outline a moderate alternative to the traditional Irish American perspective on Northern Ireland: strong financial and political support for the Provisional IRA's military campaign to bring about a socialist, united Ireland. The message was clear: Americans should renounce organizations promoting violence in favor of peace. By highlighting an alternative to violence, the Four Horsemen were making a significant divergence with precedent. Kennedy later claimed, "That was the historic break with the Irish-American tradition, and it was welcomed with relief by both the British and Irish Governments."[84]

The Foreign Office recognized that the St. Patrick's Day statement represented a severe blow to IRA supporters in the United States. But bureaucrats were not convinced they could trust Ted Kennedy to support the United Kingdom's efforts, "It is not clear how far this statement

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[83] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 50.
[84] Edward M. Kennedy Oral History, March 20, 2006, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/edward-m-kennedy-oral-history-3202006.

represents a real and sustained change of heart on the part of Senator Kennedy (early utterances were unhelpful to us)."[85] British diplomats knew that the Four Horsemen would seek to balance their statement with scrutiny of the British position as well, and it was suggested that Ted Kennedy would spearhead a fact-finding mission to Northern Ireland.

Assessing the Impact of the Four Horsemen

Together, the Four Horsemen charted new territory for Irish American politics. There was an essential tension between the Four Horsemen's alliance with the British: the American leaders were willing to risk domestic political capital for the possibility of peace, but they expected political momentum in Northern Ireland in return. They needed evidence that their calls for peaceful reconciliation produced results that the armed struggle could not. Yet political momentum was not the British government's primary goal. Rather, officials sought stability over the security situation more than anything else. On their end, the thinking went that only if physical security could be maintained for an extended period of time, then political progress could be sought. Former Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern explained, "While the Four Horsemen wanted movement, tangible developments, the British government saw no news as good news — they prioritized the stability of the security situation over reaching a new political settlement."[86] Thus, when the Four Horsemen sought some sort of progress following the inaugural St. Patrick's Day message in 1977, they were frustrated by the seeming indifference of the British government. HMG also had a difficult line to tow— while London recognized the benefits of responsible Irish American leaders, they could not allow their willingness to work with the Four

[85] Memo, "Luncheon at the United States Embassy: Friday 29 April" briefing memo in preparation for meeting with Jack Crowley (1977), CJ4/1845, The National Archives.
[86] Transcript, Bertie Ahern Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/bertie-ahern-oral-history.

Horsemen to undermine support for British policy on Northern Ireland. They continued to view some of the Four Horsemen's actions as interference in domestic policy, which remained unacceptable. Still, the Four Horsemen represented the beginning of a more serious, sustained U.S. engagement with the thorny issue of the Troubles.

In a conflict spanning three decades, six American presidents, seven British prime ministers, and seven Irish Taoisigh, Ted Kennedy and John Hume remained the longest-serving officials involved in the Northern Ireland conflict. And Kennedy's dedication to the problem only grew; one of his longtime aides, Carey Parker, believes healthcare was the only other issue in which the Senator took on as a career-long project.[87] This continuity in policy and wealth of knowledge were essential in educating American politicians and eventually reaching a peace settlement. Documents and oral interviews demonstrate that every administration, on both sides of the Irish sea as well as the Atlantic, experienced a learning curve upon assuming responsibility. Thus, movement in Northern Ireland was prone to fits and starts as each government sought their own approach to curbing violence and achieving political progress. Yet Kennedy and key allies such as O'Neill remained relative constants, helping to direct each subsequent administration toward pro-nationalist moderation. "We've had many different American Presidents during that period and each one brings something somewhat different to the table in terms of their thinking about Ireland," John Hume reflected, "but Kennedy and his folks seem to be the constant element with all the memory of what's gone before to bring to bear on a sitting President, a new President."[88]

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[87] Transcript, Carey Parker Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/carey-parker-oral-history-10202008.

[88] Transcript, John Hume Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/john-hume-oral-history.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note the level of engagement Kennedy was able to maintain without any formal Congressional positions, like membership in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Rather than utilize the formal levers of power to influence federal policy, Kennedy and the Four Horsemen relied on their political cache as leaders of national prominence. It was this leadership of opinion that made an impact for the Four Horsemen's Irish American constituencies, not necessarily what committee hearings they were chairing. It was also this leadership that allowed them direct access to the multiple presidents with whom they would work, advise, and challenge.

Many take Kennedy's three decades-long commitment to Northern Ireland, as well as that of the other Four Horsemen, as a given. Yet it is remarkable to consider how voluntary this involvement was— they risked losing considerable support from Irish Americans in their constituencies. By advocating for peace and denouncing "the bomb and the bullet," the Four Horsemen were automatically seen as traitors to the cause among a large swath of Irish America. Moreover, despite an evolution in their perspective on Irish nationalism, Great Britain never fully appreciated the beneficial impact of the Four Horsemen's efforts. Their moderation would help guide negotiations in more peaceful directions while empowering moderate nationalists like Hume that had long been derided in the diasporic rush to support the IRA.

Chapter III: The Carter Initiative

The Four Horsemen and John Hume recognized the election of Democratic president Jimmy Carter as a momentous opportunity to change American policy toward Northern Ireland. With Carter's emphasis on moral diplomacy and a detailed attention to human rights, the former governor of Georgia was well placed to dedicate new energy toward the Troubles and its concomitant divide in the United States. The Four Horsemen expended great political energy to put the Troubles on the administration's agenda— their years of experience with the issue, and the continuity of their advocacy, enabled these prominent Congressmen to persuade the Carter administration to adopt their moderate position of inclusive politics. But, like almost every other American politician at the time, Jimmy Carter was not always an informed observer on the province's ethnic strife. The Four Horsemen were therefore well placed to form Carter's conception of the problems in Northern Ireland and the proper means to achieve peace.

Carter Discovers Ireland

The Carter administration marked a turning point in the United States' policy on Northern Ireland, thanks in part to the strong influence of the Four Horsemen. After eight years of American foreign policy dominated by Henry Kissinger and realpolitik, the election of Jimmy Carter to the presidency represented a breath of fresh air to Democrats like Kennedy and his allies. Despite a lack of foreign policy experience, Jimmy Carter entered office with a distinct approach to the United States' foreign relations: to ensure that American morality was reflected in its foreign policy. Carter thought President Nixon and Ford's realist view of international relations caused the United States to adopt the tactics of its adversaries in pursuit of self-interest.

His response was to emphasize a value-based foreign policy that took as its centerpiece a focus on human rights. In his 1977 inaugural address, Carter told the nation,

> Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights. We do not seek to intimidate, but it is clear that a world which others can dominate with impunity would be inhospitable to decency and a threat to the well-being of all people.[89]

Consistent with his personal ideology, this rights-based foreign policy played well with the American public after the Vietnam War and a Congress who had made it a centerpiece of investigations in recent years.[90] Instead of exporting democratization and broad liberal reforms to the rest of the world, American liberals lowered their sights to achieve more modest human rights aims after the Vietnam War. Liberal human rights supporters chose political imprisonment and torture, the most severe of civil and political rights violations, as a target of opposition. President Carter was adamant that the United States hold its allies to the same human rights standards as the rest of the world— this resulted in intense pressure on Argentina, South Korea, Iran, Rhodesia, and South Africa to reform their repressive regimes and an end to American support for Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza.[91] Yet this attention to human rights did not immediately involve the United States' closest ally, Great Britain.

In fact, Carter's earliest engagement with the Irish politics revealed just how poorly he understood the issues. He made two serious missteps during the 1976 campaign that raised red flags in Britain and the United States. In New York City's St Patrick's Day parade, an "England

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[89] Inaugural Address of Jimmy Carter, January 20, 1977, Yale Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/carter.asp.
[90] Robert A. Strong, "Jimmy Carter: Foreign Affairs," The Miller Center, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/foreign-affairs.
[91] "Carter's Foreign Policy," Department of State Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/carter.

get out of Ireland" button was attached to Carter's lapel. *The Economist* published a photo of Carter wearing the button without noticing its message. At the time, the photo garnered scant attention in both the United Kingdom and the United States. However, when the Daily Express was set to republish the photograph in late October, the Carter campaign recognized they had ventured into a political minefield. A campaign aide told the press that the button had been pinned to Carter's lapel without his notice, and the picture was taken before he could take it off. With November fast approaching, Carter had also recently attended a fundraiser in Pittsburgh hosted by the pro-IRA Irish National Caucus. The Irish People, a subsidiary of NORAID, had reported Carter saying, "We have watched passively as human rights are violated in Ireland… If other nations want our friendship and support, they must understand that we want to see basic human rights respected."[92]

Following this gaffe, the Irish government was incensed. Ambassador Michael Lillis called the campaign's press aide Jody Powell, telling him that if Carter did not issue a retraction within an hour, the Irish Embassy would issue a statement condemning his "irresponsible policy on Ireland." Carter phoned Lillis five minutes later, and the ambassador told him what he needed to say. The campaign issued a personal memo to the Irish Foreign Minister affirming, "Governor Carter has never advocated violence as part of the solution to the tragic problems in Northern Ireland. He has never endorsed the tactics of organizations which either implicitly or explicitly advocate such a solution."[93] Lillis remarked, "That was where he got his tutorial on dealing with the Irish government."[94] These mistakes demonstrate Carter had very little information on the

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[92] Adrian Flannelly, "Irish National Caucus Meets Governor Carter," The Irish People, 11/6/1976, http://ulib.iupuidigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/IP/id/6955/rec/222.
[93] Letter to Fitzgerald from Carter, in US Presidential Election and Northern Ireland, CJ 4/1835, The National Archives.
[94] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history.

politics behind the Troubles, and he was therefore prone to persuasion from pro-IRA sympathizers.

The United Kingdom was not severely alarmed by this event, merely attributing the overtures as a last-ditch effort in an especially tight campaign. Carter's mistakes were not seen as a political liability among the American public, and John Hume assured British officials that Carter did not hold any campaign promises or debts to Irish America. Nevertheless, the foreign policy strategy Carter advocated on the campaign trail, namely a focus on human rights, also had the potential to exert new pressure on the United Kingdom's Northern Ireland policy. the Foreign Office understandably held a fear of the unknown— namely, a fear of Irish American influence within the Democratic establishment. One British civil servant remarked, "We have not, since 1968 when the present Irish troubles began, had a Democratic president and we have no experience of how Democratic party pressure may cause him to act on Ireland."[95] The British soon found out the extent of Irish interest and lobbying within the Democratic party, both from the moderate Four Horsemen and the militant Irish National Caucus.

Tip O'Neill was the first to bring the Carter administration's attention to Northern Ireland as the Speaker sought out Washington's decision makers in both formal and informal channels. The month following the Four Horsemen's first St. Patrick's Day statement, O'Neill attended a Georgetown dinner party hosted by New York Democrat Johnathan Bingham. Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski was also in attendance, and spent a good deal of time speaking about the administration's foreign policy. When O'Neill posed a question on Northern Ireland and no one in the room seemed to know how to respond, Tip was remembered as saying, "That's what's wrong. That's the whole problem. There's no awareness of what's going on in

[95] Letter from I.M Burns to P.L.V. Mallet, RID, FCO, 1/13/1977, in US Presidential Election and Northern Ireland, CJ 4/1835, The National Archives.

Northern Ireland."[96] As Speaker of the House, O'Neill had a weekly breakfast with the president. Sean Donlon, the Irish ambassador at the time, remembers O'Neill would frequently call the embassy before his meeting, asking if there was news on Northern Ireland that he could communicate to Carter as a way to generate interest in the matter. Donlon recalls O'Neill was "always trying to spin a new yarn."[97] The Speaker reasoned that the more context President Carter had on the issue, the more likely he was to take action. On the other hand, Carter had reasons to accede to the Speaker's strong preferences, since his help was essential to achieve the president's policy goals.

Drawing on Carter's emphasis on establishing a moral foreign policy for the United States, Northern Ireland was a natural choice to assert that not even the special relationship was immune from scrutiny. Jimmy Carter's identity as a Protestant Southerner was also a unique asset in Ted Kennedy's mind. With no distinct ties to Northern Ireland, Carter would be perceived as a more neutral arbiter than the Four Horsemen, as they represented strong Irish constituencies and came from staunch Irish Catholic backgrounds.[98] Senators Kennedy, Moynihan, and Speaker O'Neill met with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in June of 1977 with a proposal to the administration: issue a public statement on Northern Ireland to support those working for peace, while offering economic aid if political progress is achieved. After their initial meeting, the Congressmen received a terse rejection letter from the Department of State. The letter reasoned that the United States would consider intervening if both parties believed this

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[96] David Murray, "The Irish American Stake," *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1977/09/04/the-irish-american-stake/0815e7d8-c159-4939-af5c-0843be163f33/.

[97] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history-prime-minister-ireland.

[98] "Ted Kennedy and the Troubles Part 1," The Miller Center, May 17, 2016, https://millercenter.org/issues-policy/foreign-policy/ted-kennedy-and-the-troubles-part-1.

would be useful. But neither the Irish or British governments had formally requested the US take an active part, so any U.S. action without consent would be both inappropriate and counterproductive.[99] This argument was identical to the ones made by the Nixon and Ford administrations to justify nonintervention.

The letter, however, was misleading in asserting *neither* government requested the United States become more involved. Irish officials consistently asked the US government to play an active role, but they were aware that they could never ask nor convince American officials to turn their backs on the British and the special relationship. So, nothing close to a 'formal' request would have been lodged by the Republic of Ireland, despite its clear interest in US involvement. The United Kingdom also believed the US had a useful role to play, but the UK had clearly delineated their requests for the past decade: for the Department of Justice and FBI to investigate and prosecute domestic gunrunning and IRA fundraising. The British did not deny the United States had a helpful role to play, but they defined the role in a narrow way. Internal diplomatic correspondence at the time confirmed this view, "We are hoping that they [USG] will curb their impatience and continue with the policy of noninvolvement in the province (except where we specifically ask for their help), which, as you know, has suited us very well indeed."[100] Moreover, the State Department's natural inclination, as a component of the executive branch, made its bureaucracy hesitant to engage in Congressional-led foreign policy initiatives. As long as Northern Ireland policy was emanating from the Department of State, the preference for the special relationship would persist ahead of the interests of Irish America.

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[99] "Luncheon at the United States Embassy: Friday 29 April" briefing memo in preparation for meeting with Jack Crowley (1977), The National Archives.

[100] Letter to RM Russell Esq British Embassy Washington from PLV Mallet, "Northern Ireland and the United States," December 3, 1976, The National Archives.

Therefore, O'Neill and Kennedy continued to press the White House directly for a new initiative. Senator Kennedy gave a solo speech in the summer, vocally supporting the peaceful reconciliation championed by John Hume. This speech offered a template for the Carter administration to conceptualize what the Four Horsemen were advocating for, and the speech demonstrated Kennedy's commitment to the issue. As two of the most prominent members of Congress, they continually negotiated and eventually triumphed two months later. In spite of a stodgily Anglophilic State Department, and initial opposition from the National Security Council and the president's home state congressional delegation, the White House was able to circumvent the deep-seated bureaucratic sympathy for the British. This is a testament to the importance of Speaker O'Neill and Senator Kennedy within the halls of power— the Carter administration recognized how meaningful this issue was to them and calculated that following their lead would be politically valuable to Carter in other ways. From social security reform to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Speaker O'Neill was essential to passing Carter's legislative program.[101] In fact, O'Neill often approached negotiations with a clear quid pro quo for a Northern Ireland initiative. President Carter even acknowledged that the Four Horsemen were his lodestars,

> Well, the State Department was not in favor of what I did…But I didn't really consult with them too thoroughly. I had a lot of confidence in Pat Moynihan, and Tip O'Neill was visiting me every day. Hugh Carey was very important to me as a politician, so was Ted Kennedy. So those four people, who had connections directly with Ireland, were good.[102]

In this way, support for Irish republicanism and peace talks became important components of Carter's international human rights agenda. For the Four Horsemen and their foreign allies, the primary issue in Northern Ireland was the government's violation of the

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[101] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 62.
[102] *In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America*, Jimmy Carter interview.

Catholic minority's rights. This began originally with the problems motivating the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement, such as gerrymandering and the right to vote, but escalated during the introduction of internment without trial and questionable interrogation tactics. In March 1976, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees announced the British government would suspend special category status for new prisoners convicted of terrorist offences. Previously, members of paramilitary organizations had refused to be classified as regular criminals, arguing they were imprisoned for political acts and should be categorized as prisoners of war. The government granted special category status to these prisoners as a concession, allowing them to wear civilian clothes and house them separately from other prisoners. The decision to suspend special category status signaled an unwillingness to compromise with the IRA, what some called a process of "criminalization."

In response, new paramilitary arrivals refused to wear the prison jumpsuit, objecting to their characterization of common criminals. Instead, prisoners wore blankets to cover themselves. When the government ended special category status to all prisoners convicted of terrorism in 1980, the protest escalated to the "dirty protest," where prisoners refused to bath and dumped their own excrement on their cells, and the hunger protest, where prisoners starved themselves to bring back special category status. Although these measures seem strange to outsiders, the fight for recognition among Irish republicans was deeply important to the movement. The characterization of the violence exposed the root of conflict— whereas the British saw the Provisional IRA as an insurgent terrorist group provoking civil unrest and violence, the IRA wanted to be recognized as an independence movement fighting a war. The contention over how the conflict should be categorized was an innately political issue, and republicans saw these moves as gross violations of their political rights. The end of special

category status and internment without trial were just an amplification of British human rights abuses like housing discrimination and voter suppression.[103]

The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* emerged as an early avenue for reorienting official policy toward Britain, and they focused on the issues of torture and political imprisonment that galvanized liberal human rights advocates. The State Department compiled these reports and submitted them to the Congress every year. The 1977 inaugural report's criticisms of the United Kingdom's human rights practices all related to Northern Ireland. The statement noted the European Commission on Human Rights found five sensory deprivation interrogation tactics problematic in a 1976 report, with allegations of torture lodged by the victims. The European Court of Human Rights rejected the allegations of torture in a 1978 decision, but found the tactics violated Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as inhuman and degrading treatment. Additionally, the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* cited the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1976 and the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act of 1973 as significant restrictions of personal liberties, but close parliamentary scrutiny kept the measures in check. In summary, the 1977 report identified key faults in the United Kingdom's response to conflict in Northern Ireland, but credited HMG for working with European bodies in its judgements and ending controversial practices.[104]

The 1978 *Country Reports on Human Rights* was much more thorough in its analysis of the state of human rights in Northern Ireland. The report discussed an investigation conducted by Amnesty International the year prior, in which the organization recommended an independent

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[103] Martin Melaugh, "The Hunger Strike of 1981- A Chronology of Main Events," Conflict Archive on the Internet, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/hstrike/chronology.htm.

[104] 1978 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,* 319, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015078705632&view=1up&seq=329.

inquiry to investigate allegations of police misconduct by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In this report, the State Department recognized Northern Ireland as an immense challenge to the United Kingdom's reputation as a trailblazer in civil, political, and economic rights. But the administration did not consider Northern Ireland a major human rights issue for a variety of reasons: the UK had already received intense scrutiny from the European community over its practices, it had mostly ended the problematic practices in question, and the government was complying with international courts tasked with investigating claims. Furthermore, the importance placed on the special relationship between the U.S. and the U.K. was also a factor: as the Carter administration elevated its critique of the Soviet Union's human rights record, the U.S. ran the risk of losing credibility by calling out its closest partner. If there was a hierarchy of human rights abusers, Great Britain was not at the top of the list.

Moreover, framing the Irish question around human rights became increasingly problematic as militant republicans used this language to demand direct U.S. support for the IRA. Father Sean McManus, founder of the Irish National Caucus, lobbied the Carter administration to take action on Northern Ireland, specifically to support the Catholic minority and advocate for a united Ireland. After meetings on Capitol Hill and with administration officials, McManus reported a change in "atmosphere at the White House." His statement insinuated the possibility that President Carter might support the militant view of the conflict as he previously hinted during the 1976 campaign, and that he would pressure the British Prime Minister to withdraw troops from Northern Ireland.[105] The Irish government quickly rejected McManus' claims and the possibility that the Carter administration would forcefully oppose the British on Northern Ireland in the language of human rights (in the way the INC would have

[105] "Luncheon at the United States Embassy: Friday 29 April" briefing memo in preparation for meeting with Jack Crowley (1977), The National Archives.

wanted it to). When the Irish Foreign Minister, Garrett Fitzgerald, visited the White House a few weeks later, McManus' inflated claims proved hollow. Together with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Fitzgerald issued a joint statement rebuking supposed official support for the IRA, asserting the need "to ensure that a legitimate concern for human rights is not misused by those who support violence as a means to a political end in Ireland."[106]

As a result, criticism of British human rights abuses presented a slippery slope for Irish and American officials. This was mostly because human rights concerns were voiced by the IRA, and both governments took pains to avoid publicly associating with their cause. Although the Irish government and many American politicians took issue with actions of the British security apparatus, public criticism was not worth jeopardizing diplomatic relations with the UK. Specifically, the Irish government prioritized maintaining the Anglo-Irish relationship so that it could work together productively to reach a political settlement, there was no political benefit in associating with a terrorist organization. So, along with the Four Horsemen, the Irish government took the lead in admonishing Irish America for supporting paramilitary violence. The momentum behind human rights pressure directed at the United Kingdom was stymied. Without the Four Horsemen, the Carter administration's involvement with Northern Ireland would have ended with the Country Reports on Human Rights. But their effective lobbying would soon give John Hume's message of peace and inclusion the bully pulpit through determined lobbying.

The Carter Initiative

The Carter Initiative was a collaboration of the Four Horsemen and the Carter administration to coordinate Congressional and presidential perspectives on Northern Ireland for

[106] "Luncheon at the United States Embassy: Friday 29 April" briefing memo in preparation for meeting with Jack Crowley (1977), The National Archives.

the first time. Merging John Hume's message of peace and reconciliation with Carter's emphasis on human rights and moral diplomacy, the statement solidified the United States' position on the Troubles. President Carter recognized the Irish government's right to contribute to Northern Ireland, weighing in to balance the Anglo-Irish relationship. Carter made a direct appeal to Irish Americans to end their support for the IRA's war with the British government, as it prevented reconciliation. Most significant for long-term U.S. policy, the president promised American economic investment if a political settlement could be reached.

Recognizing the concerns of framing the violence plaguing Northern Ireland in terms of human rights, the Carter Initiative employed the language of John Hume to promote conflict-resolution. The statement was drafted by Tip O'Neill and Ted Kennedy in consultation with John Hume. Hume explained his contribution was to coax the two governments to work together to solve the problem, encouraging the British to work with the Irish, while the Four Horsemen added the promise of economic aid.[107] As Kennedy explained, the economic aid was to be the "sweetener," as both Protestants and Catholics were affected by the depressed economic prospects in the North. The content of the message is neutral on its face: an American president advocating for peace in a civil war is not revolutionary, and Carter's statement takes great pains to acknowledge both sides equally. [108] But the content of the speech's language belies the considerable political friction the initiative encountered, as noted earlier. The Washington Post called it a "deceptively mild statement" at the time.[109] The Carter Initiative was significant not

[107] Transcript, John Hume Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/john-hume-oral-history.
[108] Jimmy Carter, Northern Ireland Statement on U.S. Policy, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/244190.
[109] David Murray, "The Irish American Stake," *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1977/09/04/the-irish-american-stake/0815e7d8-c159-4939-af5c-0843be163f33/.

for its content, but for what it represented: the United States government formulating its own policy on Northern Ireland.

Two aspects of President Carter's statement are notable. Firstly, the most consequential element of the speech is the inclusion of the Irish government as a legitimate stakeholder in ending the violence. Indeed, it seems Irish officials have the strongest memory of and reverence for Carter's contributions to the peace process. This inclusion is a testament to John Hume's success in engaging the American political class— by incorporating a third element in the equation, Hume was able to provide balance to the Anglo-Irish relationship. This was the essential contribution of the "American dimension" to the Northern Ireland conflict, which would continue to have a balancing effect between the two governments as the peace process got under way in the late 1980s and 1990s. Former ambassador to Washington Sean Donlon remarked "But incidentally, let us never forget—we will never forget it on our side—Carter was the one who broke the 120-, 150-year barrier about American Presidents not intervening in Irish affairs. We must never forget that too, and we will never forget it."[110] By formally acknowledging the Irish government's role, the United States was validating their entitlement to make decisions, in tandem with the United Kingdom, on what was best for Northern Ireland and the island as a whole.

Another impactful element of Carter's initiative was the president's appeal to republicans to end financial and moral support for the Provisional Irish Republican Army. Carter's straightforward denunciation of violence dealt another severe blow to the cause of Irish republican diaspora groups, building on the Vance-Fitzgerald Statement five months prior.

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[110] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history-prime-minister-ireland.

Although Carter made a reference to human rights later in the statement, the idea that he would identify with the IRA's perception of human rights abuses emanating solely from the state, while ignoring the IRA's terrorism, was thoroughly rejected. Furthermore, the United States' decision to become involved on behalf of peace, in and of itself, was a rebuke of the IRA's message. The IRA's argument in favor of violence rested on the belief that Great Britain could not be persuaded by democratic means. In their minds, Ireland was a vestige of the British empire, which was conquered and ruled through force alone. Thus, republicans believed the British would only respond to force (with the necessary response being British troop withdrawal). The Carter statement took great pains to emphasize that peaceful means was the only way to bring security to the province and to reconcile the Catholic and Protestant communities. It was easy for the Provisional IRA to ignore a British statement denouncing the bomb and the bullet, but it was humiliating to have the IRA's loudest source of international support (Irish Americans) to be defeated by the US government.

The deceptive nature of the statement lies in Carter's assertion that the US policy remained consistent. According to the British mentality, a policy of strict impartiality meant allowing the UK government to handle the security situation within its borders. However uncontentious Carter's speech was, it is misleading to claim that US policy remained unchanged— the Carter Initiative altered the USG stance from one of nonrecognition on Northern Ireland, to a neutral promotion of peace. Issuing a mild statement is quite different from having no statement at all. Again, American recognition of the Troubles was an unqualified success for the Four Horsemen and John Hume, a crucial second step following the Four Horsemen's St. Patrick's Day message. The speech's language and message are entirely

consistent with Hume's calls for peace because he drafted it himself. John Hume was effective in his main goal: to legitimate an American dimension to the Troubles.

Additionally, a human rights agenda does not factor heavily into the president's message. Although Carter advocates for a solution which, "protects human rights and guarantees freedom from discrimination," the majority of the content centers around conflict-resolution between two communities, rather than the suppression of universal rights by a government. This is interesting considering Carter's later recollection of the initiative, in which he reflects, "Well, there was violence on both sides. I think the British exhibited unnecessary violence in trying to control the Northern Irish citizens, and the IRA obviously committed acts of violence against Great Britain…Peace was very important to me as well as human rights, those were the two things that were important to my whole administration."[111] The president obviously believed the state in Northern Ireland had violated human rights, but like the Irish government, the White House did not publicly criticize the United Kingdom. It was not good politics to oppose the British, as both governments recognized Great Britain was fundamental to a just solution. Carter should be credited for taking a stand to promote peace, but this initiative is not analogous to the diplomatic pressure exerted on the United States' other Cold War allies, like South Korea or Rhodesia. The Carter statement is a natural result of strong national and Democratic interest due to ties of heritage between two nations. The message is presented within that context, rather than simply through the lens of moral diplomacy and human rights.

Generally speaking, the British were opposed to any official US government effort relating to Northern Ireland. The Foreign Office was able to mostly restrain attempts to codify American involvement up to that point; however, diplomats in Washington were aware that they

[111] *In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America*.

would not be able to maintain silence on the issue indefinitely. Ultimately, Whitehall chose to proactively engage with the administration, rather than be seen as opposing the inevitable. Once officials in the UK were aware that a statement was imminent, multiple sources within the USG sought British input, including National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski.[112] Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan worked to develop a warm relationship with the president, which allowed the Carter Initiative to be received without great uproar in London. However, it was reported that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Roy Mason found the statement to be problematic and considered issuing his own statement regarding foreign investment in Northern Ireland. The British prioritized a stable security situation more than anything else, so the UK did not want American companies to wait for a substantial political breakthrough in order to invest. Public diplomacy in the United States promoted economic investment now, regardless of a new political settlement. In fact, Minister of State for Northern Ireland Don Concannon made an investment-centered trip to New York in 1977. The goal of the visit was to put the discouraging recent news of IRA targeted killings of businessmen into perspective, with the minister commenting, "there is hardly an American city where you do not stand a chance of being shot."[113]

Carter clearly perceived the British shock in losing its preferential treatment. He explained, "It was very important for me to express myself personally to the prime minister of Great Britain, to let them know that this was not just a superficial statement on my part but I really meant it and it was an important part of American policy."[114] So, although increased

[112] Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, July 19, 1977, NLC-10-4-1-16-8: Briefing Book II, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.
[113] The National Archives.
[114] Maurice Fitzpatrick, *John Hume in America: From Derry to DC*, (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 2.

public attention was not ideal to the British, officials recognized this marked a turning point in American involvement in Northern Ireland and begrudgingly sought to get out ahead of it.

Legacy of the Carter Initiative

The Carter administration was the first to issue a public statement on the Troubles, breaking the precedent of Presidents Nixon and Ford to steer clear of formal, public involvement in Northern Ireland. The primary importance of the Carter Initiative was the groundwork laid for future presidential initiatives for Northern Ireland. Although the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations all had their own approach to the peace process, Jimmy Carter broke ground by normalizing the United States' involvement.

Tip O'Neill and Ted Kennedy's efforts to bring Northern Ireland to the forefront of the presidential agenda was their most influential contribution in the first decade of conflict. With the first Democratic president in the White House since the Troubles began, the Four Horsemen not only conveyed a new message to the Irish American community but influenced the position of the American presidency in a way that had not been done before. Few politicians in America held the prestige and power that enabled them to influence a president's position on a foreign policy issue. The senior-most official on Wester European Affairs under Carter's National Security Council observes the Carter Statement was a pivotal moment in which the US took an issue of importance to an ethnic diaspora group and transformed policy to educate and inform the public.

The Carter Initiative was perhaps most impactful for the Irish government, and officials in the Republic have repeatedly underlined the historic nature of the policy. Reflecting decades later, Michael Lillis noted, Kennedy's "policy position evolved, but his actual effectiveness and

influence evolved in a way which was unprecedented for us in our relations with America."[115] The break in precedent Lillis is referring to, is the ability for the Irish government to advocate for its position on equal footing with the British government through the executive branch.

The promise of economic aid to Northern Ireland spelled the death of American nonintervention. Once Americans became involved, the political interest naturally followed the economic investment. Moreover, Irish diplomats noted that once the British and Irish governments began working together to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, the Irish had a much easier time finding compromise on economic issues with the British, whereas security issues were more difficult. The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) was established in 1986 by the British and Irish governments to "promote the economic and social development of those areas of both parts of Ireland which have suffered most severely from the consequences of the instability of recent years."[116] This can be attributed to the American dimension at play, as the United States was and continues to be the primary international sponsor of the IFI. Sean O'Huiginn explained, "It was a very instructive contrast; the difference between British diplomacy with an American lever in play and British diplomacy without that.[117]

However, the milquetoast statement was obviously influenced by a hesitancy to anger the United Kingdom. Therefore, President Carter can be credited for holding America's allies to a degree of moral scrutiny, but the veracity of pressure exerted by the administration visibly differed depending on whether the relationship was geopolitically strategic or based on shared

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[115] Transcript, Garret Fitzgerald Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://www.emkinstitute.org/resources/garret-fitzgerald-oral-history-prime-minister-ireland.

[116] Agreement between Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the International Fund for Ireland http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/images/stories/documents/publications/agreement/agreement.pdf.

[117] Transcript, Sean O'Huiginn Oral History, Interviewed by Andrew Young, (Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, The Miller Center), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/sean-ohuiginn-oral-history.

liberal values. The Washington Post noted the statement was rather passive compared to the administration's active role in the Middle East and South Africa.[118] Northern Ireland represented the limit at which the United States purported to advocate for "universal human rights."

[118] Edward Walsh, "Carter Says US Neutral on N. Ireland," The Washington Post, August 31, 1977 https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/08/31/carter-says-us-neutral-on-n-ireland/33033921-5737-4b01-b79e-3dd0919d538a/.

Epilogue
Missed Opportunities: When Politics Impedes Progress

The Carter administration of the late 1970's represents a lost opportunity in the United States involvement in Northern Ireland. Seismic political shifts in all three countries led to an upheaval in Northern Ireland policy. Just as the British, Irish, and American governments began to converge on a moderate shared position, electoral politics returned all three actors to the more extreme ends of the spectrum, making further progress more difficult. By 1979, Margaret Thatcher came to power in the United Kingdom, whose uniquely adversarial relationship with the IRA hampered the political space for peace.[119] The month before Thatcher swept to power, a car bomb assassinated her Northern Ireland spokesman Airy Neave as he drove out of the House of Commons' car park. The Irish National Liberation Army, a republican offshoot, later claimed responsibility. Later that year, the IRA murdered Lord Mountbatten, the Queen's cousin and the last Viceroy of India, while he was on holiday in the republic. These events convinced the Prime Minister that ensuring the security situation was fundamental problem in Northern Ireland, rather than achieving a lasting peace. Conflict between the IRA and British government would reach a fever pitch as the hunger strikes reached escalated in 1981, resulting in the death of Westminster MP Bobby Sands and nine other strikers. Just as the United States was coaxing the UK to the negotiating table, conflict within Northern Ireland made compromise untenable.

In Ireland, an ardent republican named Charles Haughey became Taoiseach in late 1979, whose nationalist tendencies undermined the Irish government's efforts to work with the UK and reduce support for the Provisional IRA's cause. From the outset, he repeatedly claimed the first priority of his government was the reunification of Ireland. Haughey instructed the embassy to

[119] This is not to say Thatcher's feelings were unwarranted.

not make any attempts to build on the Carter Initiative or involve the US government until the 'proper' political institutions were created. The institutions he had in mind would never be accepted by unionists and were thus completely unfeasible. He attempted to fire his ambassador in Washington, Sean Donlon, for working against the Irish National Caucus. As a close friend of Tip O'Neill's and essential aide to the Four Horsemen, John Hume intervened to prevent his firing. Donlon explained the Taoiseach's conception of the Troubles as simplistic, "I knew his mind on Northern Ireland and the American role: the Brits created the problem, the Brits have to solve the problem. It is not for Ireland to get involved."[120] Haughey's actions effectively eliminated the Irish government as the moderate actor.

The election of Thatcher to the premiership seriously inhibited the Irish government's ability to play a positive role in the peace process. John Hume went to great pains to explain the complexity of feeling in Northern Ireland to Thatcher's staunch unionism, as she famously remarked that Northern Ireland was as British as her home constituency of Finchley. At the Anglo-Irish Summit in 1984, Irish Foreign Minister Garret Fitzgerald suggested three proposals for a new Anglo-Irish accommodation. After verbally confirming that the proposals were acceptable, Thatcher famously rejected them all in a press conference afterwards, "I have made it quite clear—and so did Mr. Prior when he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—that a unified Ireland was one solution that is out. A second solution was confederation of two states. That is out. A third solution was joint authority. That is out."[121] This effectively left the Foreign Minister without political cover. Anglo-Irish coordination was practically impossible when one half of the negotiators refused to honor its commitments.

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[120] *In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America*.
[121] Press conference following Anglo-Irish Summit, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105790.

Additionally, Ted Kennedy challenged Jimmy Carter for the Democratic nomination in 1980. Thankfully, Tip O'Neill had been the executive's point person on Northern Ireland, so the competition did not eliminate the Democrats' coordination on the issue. Administration policy did not visibly alter either, yet the internal conflict severely hampered any further effort to generate further movement or progress. Finally, Jimmy Carter lost the 1980 presidential election to Ronald Reagan, a cold warrior and close ally of Margaret Thatcher. Though Reagan eventually took up the cause of Northern Ireland and consistently brought up the topic to Thatcher, he was incredibly hesitant to embrace the subject in the first few years of his term. In fact, he denied his Irish heritage in order to play up his appeal to 'wasps.' In this vacuum, the Four Horsemen accelerated their congressional pressure by establishing the Friends of Ireland caucus in 1981, intended to serve as a foil to Biaggi's militant Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs. Without an American president supporting the Four Horsemen and John Hume's efforts for peace, the British government was free to be obstructionist. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Humphrey Atkins told the Irish Times the SDLP should stop "using Dublin and Washington to influence British policy toward Northern Ireland."[122] The British government also issued a press release every year, timed around the Four Horsemen's St Patrick's Day message, intended to slander Ted Kennedy as an IRA sympathizer. The British government had thoroughly returned to their old habits— denigrating the intentions of the Four Horsemen and ignoring the Irish government's attempts to improve the situation.

This is not to say that the trajectory of the peace process would have radically changed had this set of leaders and political moment endured for a few years longer. The factors that caused the Troubles to lead to a peace process when they did were mostly due to internal factors.

[122] "Akins unlikely to sway SDLP," *The Irish Times*, January 29, 1979.

But, as was evidenced in the Good Friday Agreement, the American dimension played a decisive role when the peace process eventually occurred. One can imagine a counterfactual scenario in which the political environment in 1977-8 had persisted, and more progress was made to include American voices in support of peace and to bring militant Irish Americans into the constitutional republican mold. As mentioned earlier, the political turnover in London, Dublin, and Washington did not benefit Northern Ireland in the first fifteen years of the conflict— each successive administration had its own learning curve and made missteps.

Conclusion

The political moment from 1977-9 was opportune for progress on Northern Ireland. Although the following decade did not build upon this early momentum as much as it could have, it served as a template for how the peace process would play out. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 included all of the key actors that became involved during this earlier time period of engagement: the British government working in tandem with the Irish government to reform Northern Ireland's political structures for inclusivity, while the US government and American citizens supported the peace process from afar. A notable turning point in this peace process was President Bill Clinton's decision to issue visas to two IRA leaders, Joe Cahill and Gerry Adams. Gerry Adams' 1994 visit to the United States, serving as the leader of Provisional Sinn Fein, was integral to bringing militant republicans into the fold, convincing them politics may be more successful than violence. Gerry Adams has said that the IRA's ceasefire would not have been possible without Clinton's decision.[123] If the Four Horsemen had not pushed for the inclusion of the American president in Northern Ireland's peace process, Bill Clinton would not

[123] Mark Simpson, "Gerry Adams: New York in 1994 visit 'pivotal to peace,'" British Broadcasting Corporation, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-47072146.

have had the same political cover or legitimacy to make that decision. Clinton then appointed Senator George Mitchell to chair the Good Friday Negotiations, further asserting the United States' dedication to reaching a political settlement. These early years that seem inconsequential, when observed on their own terms, were in fact essential to the events that brought an end to the conflict known as the Troubles.

Though the Troubles seem like a domestic, geographically narrow affair, its events peaked the interests and support of Ireland's diaspora population. As a result, this early narrative of geographically removed yet nationally invested Irish American involvement reveals the paramount influence diaspora populations can maintain over the domestic affairs of their original homes. Though this distance potentially subjected these individuals to misguidance or misinformation, their involvement proved paramount to the eventual bureaucratic actions taken by the United States in the decade to come. The trajectory of American engagement with the "Irish question" exposed a key conflict: who speaks for Irish America? Although activist diasporic organizations were able to put Northern Ireland on the Congressional agenda, it was the most prominent Irish American politicians, in the form of the Four Horsemen, who directed the actual United States policy toward Northern Ireland. By tracing the influence of American Irish endeavors in the larger narrative of The Troubles, my work deems the relationship between diaspora populations and larger international relations worthy of academic scrutiny.

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